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The
Scholar of Bygate

A Tale

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES

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THE SCHOLAR OF BYGATE

CHAPTER I.

SECOND THOUGHTS.

THE snow came, and lay some six inches on the hills, drifted to many feet in the gullies, and still promise of more. For a couple of days, however, the low slaty clouds carried their burden over the mountains without anything more than a frown.

Those overcharged skies corresponded well with the domestic atmosphere of Bygate during the same time. Everybody about the place seemed pre-occupied and over-weighted. Sibbald stayed to hear his father come in after that extraordinary expedition, and from that time had been warned from attempting the smallest degree of intercourse

with him. This was not difficult to manage, since the old man only issued from his room for meals, and did not speak a word in the course of them. Such out-door work as was necessary (hand-feeding the sheep with hay and turnips for the chief part), Sibbald attended to, as, indeed, had been incumbent on him throughout the winter; but, for the rest, seemed to occupy himself in reading. Adelina had to look on in timidity and a great measure of alarm.

Since his affectionate leave-taking with the purpose of befriending her father, she had thought him changed, especially towards her. In his unbending moments, her cousin had shown himself so frank and easily intelligible, so like, in fact, a rosy male ideal that had long vaguely haunted Lina's maturer fancy, that she had wholly lost sight of the brusque and reticent enigma with whom her first days at Bygate had been spent. The⁴⁶ tendency, at any rate, of his feelings towards

herself had not been hidden, and if this suddenly seemed to have undergone some unaccountable eclipse or check, apprehension in such as Lina was certainly natural and excusable.

This girl did not consider the magnitude of the new influence which had been brought to bear, chiefly through her instrumentality, upon her isolated cousin; could still less make any intellectual allowance for the effect of such. From her remotest consciousness, sexual flirtation had been simply an essential element of life; of no particular meaning beyond the amusement of it, but necessary and inevitable for all that. In Sibbald Crozier, on the other hand, it had been a non-existent, or, at any rate, completely dormant faculty. The creation, or the awakening, of it in him, therefore, was likely to be attended with considerable consequences—the primary one, and perhaps motive force of all others, being an incipient self-consciousness.

It was a mere coincidence, no doubt, that his most obvious display of the revolution going on within him should be timed to this fit in his father and these lowering skies. With undoubted singularity of temperament, as shown in his unhuman aloofness from his kind, there was by no means any lack of health in Crozier,—pride of certain kinds, perhaps, merely indicating an excess of that. Self-consciousness, therefore, could only come to him as an ill; could only confront him with numberless questions, of which mere instinct, however sound, could not dispose. It was some of these which had been thrust upon him now, and of which he was compelled to read through all his books. Complacently as Adelina could accept a slight caress, she little knew of what it meant to the giver, of the fundamental whirl it could impart to the throbbing of his heart and brain. No caress so conscious and so personal had he given to her as that with which he had gone off

to Whinburnhope, and the effect of it remained with him.

On the third morning they awoke to falling snow, and as they all assembled at the first meal, no change in the domestic atmosphere was apparent. Sibbald said something about the sheep and his father damned the sheep; no other word had been spoken when they left the table. As they did so, however, it was plain to Sibbald that his cousin wanted to get hold of him; but he persistently evaded her glance. He did not want a conversation with her, and he was determined not to have one. So, ignoring her with rudeness, he put on an overcoat and a cap which folded round his head, and escaped into the yard. He found the hind there engaged with the calves, and with him he condescended to converse.

"Ay, ay, I hae 'em a' up ahint the plantin'," said the man, in answer to an inquiry put to him. "But if this gans on, we'll be short o' meat."

"Of course we shall," roared the other, angered by this indirect reminder of his father's recklessness. "Who'll have any, do you think? It shall be put off no longer."

"David Curle might aiblins spare ye a pickle hay; he was telling me that he was weel provided. But I doubt ye'll hae to be doon the dale."

Sibbald looked up at the veiled sky, and went away to inspect the sheep behind the plantation. On his return, he brought his horse from the stable, and set off through the storm to Angryhaugh.

Adelina, who was standing disconsolate at an upper window, knocked, as she saw the horseman appear; but he did not turn to look, and was a minute afterwards hidden by the falling snow. Just as she was ready to burst into the inevitable tears, there was loud banging of the doors below, and violently mastering her emotion, she ran hurriedly to her duties downstairs.

When Sibbald approached the shepherd's house,

both he and his horse all covered with snow, the first sound that greeted his ears was that of Jenniper's voice raised in song. But as he passed the window it ceased abruptly, and just as he knocked at the door the latter was opened.

"You seem to be enjoying yourself," said the visitor rather grimly, in response to the open gaze presented him.

"What for no?" was the blunt rejoinder.

"Nay, I canna tell you. Is your father at home?"

"He was gaun to Barmoor, but I think he is still outby here. I'll see anyway."

"I can see for myself." But Jenniper, just pulling her shawl over her head, had quickly passed him and disappeared round the house. There was no sound came through the open doorway, and he heard the girl call without receiving any answer.

"Then he's away," she said, as she came again bounding through the snow, which she knocked from her boots by kicks against the wall. "Is it anything I shall tell him?"

"Is your mother no here?"

"She's through to Otterburn to Uncle David, who is varry ill. She'll be here the morn likely."

"Then you are alone?" said Sibbald, with a quick glance at her after what seemed an instant's pause of astonishment.

"Is there onything strange in that?"

"May I have a few words with you?"

"Certainly," said Jenniper, turning away rather abruptly. She reappeared with a large coarse rug, which she bade Crozier throw over the horse, and then he followed her in.

This was but a resolution of the moment in Sibbald, induced by the frank intelligence which Jenniper's eyes had displayed to him. The expression of her face and bearing was in such contrast to all that he had of late lived amongst, that its wholesome allurements could not fail to exercise an immediate influence over him. His own artless looks and movements, as he released his wavy hair

from the cap which had covered it, was sufficient indication of his attitude, and displayed the temporary recovery of those impersonal characteristics (so to speak) hitherto natural to him. Jenniper construed the man with unerring instinct, else had he never entered that abode whilst she was in it; for the same reason she encountered his gaze fearlessly as he stood with his back to the fire.

"I didn't know what a blockhead I had become until I heard you singing just now."

"Did you no?" returned Jenniper with provoking archness.

"You mean you did. But I don't see how that is possible, since you haven't set eyes on me since the change began."

"It may go farther back than you imagine likely."

"But I know nicely it doesn't. I wasn't always a blockhead, Jenniper, except only in one respect, which is, that I didna try earlier to make a friend of you. Dinna be afraid, my lass, I'm

not in love with you ; ye're not the kind for me in that way, but you are the most sensible creature, man or woman, that I ever came in the way of."

"I am obliged for your good opinion, but it's possible that you have no ower mony to choose from."

"All the more reason for my being right in my judgment. Will you believe that I don't think of you as a woman at all?"

"What good would that do you?"

"Why, it might help you to talk to me sometimes, and not always to skip out of my way as if I were a ruffian. I have told you before that I am tired of my own company. You'll not refuse to help me to a little better."

"You dinna want for company now, I think," said Jenniper in surprise, turning to some occupation at the table.

"What if I dinna? It isn't yours at any rate," returned he, with the abruptness of irritation. "Would you have me always live on sweet cake and sugar?"

Sometimes you get sick of it, I can tell you. Sometimes you may think yourself an idiot for ever tasting it, and be glad to turn to the het bitterness of jennipers."

"Certainly."

"But that's not the tone I meant to use with you," he went on, suddenly checking his tongue and smoothing out his forehead. "You may thank Heaven that you haven't got up to your neck in the moss. But you never would," he added, as he looked again at her face. "You'd never be fool enough for that."

Jenniper burst into a laugh at his frankness.

"Ye may laugh, my lass; but it's no laughing matter, I can assure you," continued he with unexpected vehemence. "Do ye think it's pleasant to feel the cords cutting tighter and tighter around you, and you canna for the life o' you tear them off? Or to keep drinking at the sweet cup that you ken a' the time to hold poison, that you ought to fling far away?"

"What, will you do what you haena a mind to?" demanded Jenniper, not without a glance of disdain.

"Just what I thought myself but a very short time since."

"I hae heard mony lies about you, but this from yoursel' is the strangest of a'."

"But it's not a lie," asserted Sibbald. "It's just a truth that I wouldna tell to anybody but yoursel'."

"And why to me?" said Jenniper with what seemed a sudden flash of resentment.

"Because ye have sense, Jenniper, as I have said,—the only body that I have felt inclined to talk sense to in all my life—"

"And ye begin by talking nonsense," interposed she, still with an unusual degree of warmth, her eyes fixed undauntedly upon him. "No, no, I winna believe it, though you tell it me yourself, though you swear to it a thousand times. Who is it that kens what he wants to do, or what he ought to do, and doesna do it? No the like of Sibbald Crozier onyway."

Sibbald was arrested by the fiery glance she fixed on him, as much as by the unexpected tenor of her remarks. He had not looked for this. Disdain he had expected; some logical argument he had hoped. But this personal note she struck took him wholly unawares. He stared at her until the movement of her face warned him off. He had never beheld his incipient imbecility in so flagrant a light as that which Jenniper's eyes had shed on it, and once more he recoiled from the apparently ignoble toils.

"You are right, my lass," he exclaimed, as he moved his eyes from hers, "it's no the like o' me. But what should hae gien you a good opinion of me I dinna ken, nor will I ask. All the same, I thank you for it. You have gien me what I wanted, and what I knew you only, if onybody, *could* gie. Good-bye."

Jenniper put her hand in the one he extended, and Crozier clasped it heartily, fancying, at the

same time, that he felt his masculine grip returned. As he went out into the snow, he spoke of the legitimate object of his visit, and leaving a message with her about it, he stepped into the stirrup.

The snow did not drive in fully against her, but many of the flakes alighted on her head and dress as Jenniper stood in the doorway to watch her visitor depart. When once mounted, Sibbald did not turn again to give any second adieu, although the girl's gaze seemed rather to expect one. The whirling snow soon enveloped the horseman and hid him from her view; still she stood there.

"Ay, ay, he'll gan just like ony fool of 'em a'. . . Well, ha'd away, man, for me."

Inside the house, despite the determined tone of her exclamation and the bang of the closing door, Jenniper still stood some minutes on the hearthstone, exactly where Crozier had stood. Looking down to the floor, she saw his two damp

footprints still lingering on the stone, and in a playful way she had placed her own soles upon them, straightened her shoulders, flung her hands behind her back, and even imported into her clear bright face some of the savage reflection that had characterised his when standing there before her. When the impersonation took full possession of her fancy, she burst into a ringing laugh, after which she resumed her song and her work together.

Crozier traversed the snow-bound slope in a different mood. Jenniper's report had warned him that there was no great help to be had from the Angryhaugh surplus of hay, so he had set his face to a longer ride down the valley. It was not that errand, however, that regulated his thoughts, or spirits, despite the conditions under which he had to ride. His recent interview had more clearly defined the ills under which he had known himself lately to have laboured, and so

had concentrated his resentment to a more distinct method of attack. He was very far from wishing to succumb to the charms of any woman, for his arrogant independence saw only in that a species of subjugation without any adequate return. For womanhood in the abstract he had long had even a chivalrous regard, but before transforming that into a practical daily influence he was inclined to pause. Reason had had no place in prompting his inclination to Adelina, nor, it appeared, from lucid intervals such as this, was it like to have. She, as the first tangible embodiment of ideals which had haunted him, had had him at a disadvantage, and had laid the trains before he so much as knew that explosives were in the question. Personally, of course, he discovered no resentment against Adelina as an individual. Her misfortunes he still pitied; her weaknesses still glossed over in the ideal way. But his recent behaviour to her must cease.

To this measure of clearness had he advanced by the time he was skirting the wall of the Howff. All was shrouded in snow, and some grouse which were huddled together on the top of the wall and on the twigs of a self-sown birch tree leaning over it, paid no heed to his near approach. Presently he gained the road, and was then able to urge his horse to a brisker pace.

For one of Crozier's temperament, thoughts such as these were but ill company on a journey which, in itself, was a source of irritation. However, in his quest of provender he was more successful than he had any right to expect, so that by the time he was again drawing near to Bygate, after nearly three hours' absence, he had only his own personal considerations to engage him. These, too, he had got into still further order. With characteristic candour he had resolved upon a frank conversation with Adelina, in which he might expound the whole of his position to her,

and dictate the terms of their future intercourse. These he had formulated with extraordinary prudence, guided in the main by Jenniper's taunt as to what a man wants, or at any rate ought, to do, and with them foremost in his mind, he entered the house in a far serener mood than he had left it.

Not seeing Lina in the kitchen, as he had expected, he asked Isabel for her, resolving to dispose of the matter forthwith.

"She's in her room, likely," was the off-hand reply. "I haena seen her since she was in to the master."

"In to the master?"

"Ay, ay, he ca'd her doon the minute ye had left here, and I doubt he has sair flegged her again."

"Is he in?"

"Na; he's away on his horse. I wonder ye didna meet him, for he canna be up the dale on siccan a day."

In astonishment Sibbald ran upstairs, two steps at a time.

“Lina, my lass! . . . Lina!” he called, and looked into one room after another, but could get neither sound nor glimpse of his cousin. He even went to the attic where the girl had been once before imprisoned, but the key was in the door, and he did not find her inside. All recent reflection was instantly lost in a sickening dread of some new freak of his father’s brutality, especially as he thought of the old man’s surly behaviour of the last two days. He looked into the parlour, but in this respect Isabel was right, for his father was not there. Next he went out to the yard, and seeing the bondager, asked again for Adelina.

“I was just thinking but she’ll be lost.”

“What the devil do you mean?” exclaimed Sibbald, exasperated out of his usual moderation of expression.

“She was off doon the brae some hours ago, before the master went, and it was snowing tarr’ble hard.”

"Did he go after her?"

"I dinna ken," said the woman in a tone which repudiated all concern or even curiosity in the matter.

"Which way did she gan?"

"I dinna ken that either."

Sibbald turned away in violent anger at her insensibility, and reflected an instant as to what he was to do. All footsteps were long since obliterated, although the snow had been lighter for the last hour. Something he must do, and Whinburnhope alone presented itself as at all a possible clue. So before his horse had baited from his recent journey, Sibbald went into the stable to saddle him again. As he removed the halter, fresh sounds in the yard took him out, and an astonishing spectacle greeted his eyes there.

"Go—go and save her life!" shrieked the fiddler Felton, in an agony of despair, when he saw young Crozier appear. "Prayers do not avail with this

diabolical brute. For God's sake go—if he has not already killed her.”

So astounding was the whole incident that Sibbald could for a moment only stare in perplexity. His father had alighted from his horse, upon which he had evidently just arrived with Felton in front of him, for the fiddler was still on the animal's back, with his hands bound tightly with a rope behind him. The latter's features were agitated beyond description, as by movements of his neck, to accompany his frenzied entreaty, he indicated the direction in which Sibbald would ride. As the old farmer pulled his victim unceremoniously to the ground, Sibbald boldly approached the latter, assured him that Adelina should be attended to, and with a silent glance into his father's face, returned to the stable for his horse, and rode away.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCENT.

WHEN, after witnessing Sibbald's departure, Adeline hurried from her room, the first sound which greeted her ears upon the landing was that of her uncle's voice summoning herself in no uncertain tone. He was evidently in the doorway of the kitchen, expecting her to be engaged in that department, and for an instant she hesitated what to do. But the first heavy tread of a footstep upon the stair at once decided her, and running down the stairs, she met the old farmer before he had come far towards her.

"Come away here!" said he, turning abruptly round as she descended, using just the words and tone

in which he addressed his sheep-dogs. He strode into the parlour, and Lina followed, trembling.

As she entered, she noticed (from the oddity of its appearance rather than any power of observation in herself) that a coat was spread out upon the table, and that a piece of paper lay upon it. No emotion of any kind connected itself with the sight; for one thing, the girl was too much agitated for anything of that sort. She sent her eyes from the table to her formidable antagonist, and fixed them there with an expression of timidity, even terror and appeal, none of which received from him the smallest regard.

It was not until that morning that old Crozier had so much as thought of the coat which Felton had so considerately pressed upon him as an additional safeguard against the cold after their few hours' conviviality. As he passed again to the parlour after the unsociable meal, his eye happened to alight upon the garment as it hung

upon the peg in the hall. It jumped with some thought which had suddenly assailed him, and snatching it from its place he carried it into the room with him. When the door was closed he flung the coat to the table and began immediately to rifle the pockets. It seemed as though his efforts were to be unrewarded until the last pocket was reached. From that he produced a piece of paper, which he unfolded with singular method. There was writing upon it, and as his features were fixed in its perusal they assumed an extraordinary expression.

It was not so much one as a whole series of expressions that animated that picturesque old face in this apparently simple employment. As he began, every wrinkle of his sixty years was drawn to one common centre of furious investigation—by no means a judicial investigation, for of impartiality even in inquiry these features could never own a trace. Mr. Crozier was not in the habit of inquiring so much as of asserting upon

any topic whatsoever, and if circumstances should, as now, form such extraordinary combination as to render inquiry even apparently necessary, those features very plainly resented such a course, and more than vaguely foreshadowed the result which was to be obtained. In this case even the concession to inquiry lasted but a moment, passing swiftly to a very much more positive kind of look. Suspicious inquiry, conviction, triumphant and ferocious sentence and execution, sped in rapid succession over those expressive features like varying storm clouds over a broken sky. Their corresponding emotions evidently similarly agitated the depths within, for when the reading was ended even old Crozier found it necessary to pause. You might have thought that the old hand trembled as the paper was allowed to fall from its clutch to the table underneath, could it have been supposed that the master of Bygate was capable of a tremble.

This outcome of the old man's two days' sullen meditation was purely accidental, and by no means the result of a logical analysis of facts. The gloom which had overwhelmed him for that time was but an exaggerated form of the dawn usually succeeding such a night. That it was so exaggerated might no doubt be easily explained by the fact that the farmer had for so long been a stranger to diversions of this kind; he himself attributed it solely to the quality of the whisky with which he had been entertained. From whichever cause, it was not until this third morning that the faintest thought of reconnecting the jovial Felton with the pursuit he had in hand occurred to Mr. Crozier's brain. It had now occurred, and here was the beginning of a result.

When he had recovered from the shock which it had caused, the farmer took up the coat and spread it open upon the table, laying the letter in the middle of the back. Unknown to Sibbald,

this chanced to be coincident with his departure to seek hay at Angryhaugh, and as the old man looked up from his employment he saw his son riding forth, just as Adelina was also doing from a window overhead. Whether as an immediate consequence of this need not be decided, but certainly after his eye had rested scarce a second upon Sibbald, Crozier issued from his room with much clatter of the doors, to demand the immediate presence of his niece.

It has been said that Lina's terror and appeal were utterly lost upon her uncle at this moment, as indeed at most other times. That she shrank and shivered beneath his glance was always a satisfaction; just now it was a malicious delight, which he took no trouble to disguise. Seeing her so abject there, he stepped forward just to give her an incipient shake, like a cat betraying its humorous intention to a victim. Then planting her in an upright position by the table edge, he took up the bit of paper. Not until that moment did Adelina recognise it to

contain writing of her own, but when she did her features paled even from what they had been before.

“Ha, ye hae seen that before, then?” said the old man, instantly construing her expression. “But ye’ll hae forgotten the few wawds, daur say. I’ll just bring ’em to your mind again.” And therewith he began to read in a voice affected and ridiculously unnatural.

“‘I cannot, cannot yet believe that you are really my own dear father. It would kill me to see you again yet, so if you really love me you will not attempt to do so. It is just like a prison here, and if you were found out it would only make things far worse for me as well as for you. I can’t understand it, for all the long letters you have sent to me. It is so different from the father I have always known. Do go away from here until I can think it all over. Oh, I dare not think of what this dreadful old man will do if he

finds out, and I believe he has suspicions. Do go away for your own safety. ADELINA.’”

“A braw letter, hinny, yon. Did ye write it, then?”

“Yes, I did,” exclaimed Lina, with a wholly unexpected flash of spirit. “How did you get it?”

“Ye’ll answer my questions fawst before ye begin to examine me,” said Crozier, scowling.

“I shall not answer any of your questions, so there! You are a cruel, wicked man.”

“But ye’ll turn game at last then,” vociferated the old man, stepping forward and clutching the muscle of her arm with a grip which almost made the girl scream. “Do ye ken that ye’ll do what I bid ye? will ye noo?”

“You only dare do this to me because I’m a girl. . . . If I was a man I—I’d shoot you.”

“A lass may do that, ye ken,” laughed he, enjoying this resistance more than the usual whine.

"Just ha'd a minute, and ye shall hae a fair chance. . . . Will ye?"

This was as he pounced upon her again, for the moment his hold was relaxed Lina had darted to the door. He turned the key, and took it out, thrusting her back roughly to the position in which he had formerly placed her.

"A fair chance I tell ye. . . . Ay, that ye shall." He kept on muttering as he brought forward a gun from a rack in the corner which held several. He clicked the trigger, and saw that it was unloaded. Then taking up his flasks he tipped in a charge, rammed it in the old approved way, and when all was completed he held out the stock to his adversary.

"Man or woman, ye can touch a trigger ony-way," said he, with more real jocosity than he had yet displayed in this interview. "Tak' a ha'd of het!"

Adelina shrank in terror from the formidable weapon, by no means sure that even of itself it might not in an instant go off. All her bravery

of a minute ago seemed to be deserting her, and the tears already had fallen down her cheeks.

"Then dinna mak' a fool o' yersel'," said the old man more fiercely. "I wouldna dea it if ye were a man, do ye say? My sartie, but we'll see about that. Gimmer or tup's a' yane to sicna breed, as ye'll larn at the hinder end. . . . Now, ha'd your din, I tell ye."

This was hurled as at a whimpering child, and it certainly did appear to exercise some composing influence upon Lina.

"In the forst place, ye'll tell me how ye forst kent yon man?"

"I sha'n't tell you a word about anything."

"Ho, ho, will ye no? Is that your tune, hinny? Ye hae no yet had enough o' the dreadful old man then; hae ye no?"

At each inquiry the old man gave the girl a shake like a playful dog might do a rat; but she remained doggedly silent.

“What will ye say, then, if I strip ye to the skin and thrash ye like a fractious cou’t?” said he, thrusting his savage features close to her face. “Will that loose your tongue a wee, think you?”

“You daren’t do it,” sobbed Lina. “I’d have you to prison if you did, and so w-would Sibbald.”

“What do ye say to me?” roared Crozier, more genuinely incensed than he had yet been. “Hae the law o’ me, will ye? And Sibba’d! Ye’d like weel to see the pup thrappling the aa’d dog, would ye? Dinna be so sure that ye’d no be smooored in the fray. Set the lad against me, will ye? The wind’s i’ that airt, do ye say? Then let it blaw till it can blaw nae more, for ye’s e hae every dud frae your back the noo.”

“Oh, uncle, don’t do it!” cried Adelina, at last completely sinking under her extremity of woe. “C-can’t you pity a poor girl that means y-you no harm? Don’t—you sha’n’t touch me!”

Coming unexpectedly, the frantic assertion of the girl's strength served to fling her antagonist backwards, and he rolled over against a chair. Sitting there for an instant with his hands supporting him behind, he presented a ludicrous figure, and indeed seemed himself in doubt whether to laugh or to rage. Ultimately he leapt up, but as Adelina refastened her dress, she voluntarily withdrew from the contest.

"Yes, yes, I'll tell you everything," exclaimed she, shrinking backwards from his touch. "I will—I really, really will."

"I thought sae," said the old farmer, considerably composed by his tumble. "Then just gie the history o' yon."

"I haven't got a history. I can only tell you all I know. The first time I saw him was on the road one night when I came home from Crawston with Jenniper. He came up to speak to us, and asked me if I would go up to Whinburnhope to dance on the green."

"Do you mean to tell me that ye didna ken his face?"

"Certainly I do. He is so different, and all—all is so strange. Besides, it was raining that night, and getting dusk."

"Well, well, ha'd away. Sae ye went to the dancing?"

"One day when Sibbald was going to him he took me with him, for I think Sibbald was suspecting who he was."

The old man's brow contracted as he fixed his eyes again upon her, and as he caught this fuller glimpse of further issues.

"And ye didna ken him? Damn it, nae mair did I mysel'."

"How could I know him when I thought him dead?"

"Ay, ay, but Sib didna," flashed the other.

"But he didn't know him then."

"Not then—when did he ken him?"

"He played the fiddle to us, and when he

played a tune that was a great favourite of my father's, I got frightened—I didn't know why—and when he fixed his eyes upon me, I fainted; and I have never seen him since."

"And when did Sib ken him, I ask ye?"

Adelina was frightened by the tone, and said she didn't know.

"If ye fainted, he'd ask the reason why, daur say," said the farmer with a sarcastic snarl. "And this was before winter,—twa-three months ago! Gosh, what hae I come to! And he's been running ower a' the countryside—"

"But he didn't know; he couldn't be sure. I'm n-not sure myself even yet."

"Are ye no? Then we'll soon make ye. . . . But ye hae had letters. Who brought ye them? . . . Who brought ye them?" roared Crozier again as Lina kept silence. "Sib Ay, Sibba'd this and Sibba'd that, and Sibba'd at the varry bottom o' the damnedest roguery that was ever

played on a body i' the warld. But I'll be equal wi' the lot o' ye. . . . The varry pups turn on me."

Despite the old man's vehemence, some violent emotion as well as rage seemed to underlie this discovery of his son's treachery. Lina, feeling herself implicated in the revelation, and in the consequent injury to her cousin, attempted an excuse for Sibbald.

"Dinna ta'k o' the lad!" vociferated her uncle, quivering from head to foot, and all his features purple. "And ye-ye're the cause of it! A yeld gimmer like ye can make a doited idiot of a lad like yon! What'll we come tae?" Lina shrieked, for the man pinched her soft cheek mercilessly between his fingers. "But I'll no shiver ye," he added, throwing her off; "anither shall pay for a' your debts as weel as his ain."

A new terror suddenly seized the girl, and gave her one more unusual flood of spirit, which invested her slight and pretty features with a serious-

ness almost amounting to beauty. The crimson mark which the malignant fingers had left burned on one cheek, but the rest of her face continued pale.

“Why will you not believe that not one of us has ever wished to do the least harm to you?” said she, fixing her eyes on him. “If my father owes you money, he’ll pay it you. It’s not to avoid paying his debts that he has done this. If you would only have pity on him and go to him kindly, he would explain it all to you, as he has to me.”

“Ay, ay, and here in this varry letter ye say that ye dinna understand it,” cried the man, flourishing the incriminating epistle in her face. “But ye shall understand it afore we’ve dean wi’ him, I’s’e warr’nd ye. I ken nicely how to get to the bottom of a job like yon,—nicely I do.”

“Have you no pity in you, then, for anybody?”

“Pity enough. I gie every man his due and nac mair.”

“And c-cant you f-forgive even a little injury?”

“I’m no just sure that I can. But, daur say, opinions ’ull differ as to size. I dinna reckon twa thousand pounds, and to be made a fool o’ three times—three times, ye ken—by Collingwood Brett, to say naething of a muckle warld o’ roguery happit about yen by yen’s varry kin, no to name a lawyer to the bargain, for ye’re a damned fool if ye expect onything else frae the like o’ them—I dinna reckon this a little injury I can assure ye. Dash me, what do ye ca’ a great big muckle yane?” he went on in rising anger. “But what for do I argue wi’ ye? There’s but yae way wi’ your breed, and it’s the way wi’ nowt i’ every breed. We’ll try it onyway.”

Adelina trembled with a mysterious dread, if the truth must be told, as much on behalf of the implicated Sibbald as on that of her mythical father. She could not doubt that the old man would ride over to Whinburnhope forthwith, despite the inclement skies; and she thought that Sibbald

must have gone there. Her fears of what the tyrant was capable knew no bounds. But how could she help them? Supposing her own flight thither were physically possible, how outstrip a mounted horseman? No, all was blank, and her soul was launched into a dark welter of despair.

As she burst into this violent emotion, old Crozier, with a corresponding depth of wrath, unlocked the door and went out. But wrathful though he was, a thrill of savage elation all at once exhilarated him to heights unspeakably beyond his mood of recent days. When, therefore, he found the hind at the kitchen door inquiring for him, he gave the man a more rational and coherent reception than had been the case for months before. Speed had no place in his mind, for a glance at earth and sky assured him of the fiddler's safety.

"Oh ay, I'll come and see," said the old man, to the supreme astonishment of his dependents.

"But come away, Sandie, and hae a drap o' whisky forst."

It was these words that first reached Lina in her anguish, and she looked up suddenly, with her handkerchief to her lips. She heard the heavy steps of the hind entering, then the clink of glasses. From the brief conversation that followed, she gathered that the old man was agreeing to see the calves. This meant, at anyrate, delay, short or long, and instantly her courage rose within her. If she could but warn them, the tyrant would yet be foiled. Of snow and snow-storms she knew nothing. Hearing the footsteps of the men passing into the yard, she resolved, and instantly escaped by the front of the house.

CHAPTER III.

THE PURSUIT.

IN terror Adelina fled madly to Whinburnhope, not even having put on any additional clothing. She was wearing a hat and small woollen shawl such as she always did about the place, but for one of her fragility they afforded small protection against the wind and snow. The distance was fully three miles, and she did not know that she had one instant to spare. Indeed, when she had advanced far enough to expend her first reckless outburst of energy, and had to fall into a slower pace, she expected every moment to be overtaken by her uncle, who, she knew, would soon take horse.

To hear him would be impossible in this depth of snow, so she occasionally looked back, but the flakes which were coming thicker only drove into

her face, and obliterated the whole prospect beyond a few yards around her. So at last Lina simply fled blindly on.

She attained the mouth of the Whinburn valley without any further interference than consisted in an occasional fall on a hidden stone, the general difficulties of a road so encumbered, and the burdens of excessive alarm and fatigue. No track of any kind was visible over the spotless surface which surrounded the house. Here she had the worst accident which had yet befallen her, and which might have ended seriously. The big strong boots which her uncle made her wear, although advantageous in one way, were a hindrance and danger in others. They impeded her progress and added to her fatigue. Quite smothered in the snow, which had worked its way in at the top between the leather and her stockings, they constantly gathered great balls upon the nails with which the soles were studded, and it was owing to this that, as she mounted the bank just beside her father's cottage, she again lost her footing, and

rolled helplessly down the incline. The distance was but small, and the bed of the stream of an innocent nature, but when Adelina, after a final jolt, was brought to her senses by the embrace of the icy water, she struggled in desperate alarm to regain her feet.

In sorry plight she clambered to the bank, and strained every scrap of her remaining strength to mount it. She reached the door of the cottage, but before she had been able to knock, fell in a heap to the ground. Felton, who was within, heard with alarm the unaccountable movement, all previous footsteps having been hushed in the snow. He drew to the window to reconnoitre, and could just discern enough to suggest a woman's garments. In horror he rushed to the door, and flung it open. As he did so, Adelina's apparently lifeless face dropped to the stone, for she had so fallen as to have it awkwardly propped against the door. Seizing the figure in his arms, Felton heard the words, "He is coming," issue from the lips; but in his agony, being utterly regardless of him-

self, he only paid heed to the condition of his daughter.

"My darling lassie," he sobbed into her heedless ear, as he hugged her to his breast as though to warm and dry her there. "You came to save me, and I—I have killed you."

As she remained silent, he stared at her in agony. Then her cold and drenched condition seemed to present itself to him, and he proceeded to tear the saturated garments from her. This rough handling aroused the girl, and looking about her, she pushed him off with one hand, whilst she gathered her clothing about her with the other.

"But you must have them off, my own little lassie; everyone of them off. . . . I don't care for him. Let him come. He can but kill me, and for this I deserve it. But save me from being the death of *you*."

"I'm all right—I'm only cold, very c-cold." And her teeth audibly chattered whilst she was speaking.

Under the man's persistent entreaty Lina at

length consented to strip herself, and get into the bed, which was in a cupboard against the wall, for she admitted that she felt helplessly ill. Just as Felton had withdrawn from the room, however, for that purpose, he re-entered abruptly, to exclaim that Crozier was at the door. Once again the girl seemed disconcerted, but when the sound of her uncle's voice actually reached her she huddled her clothes together, and retreated to a little scullery which went out from the room at the back. Felton himself took up a position in the doorway, uncertain how to act, but prepared, at any rate, to protect his daughter from harm, or even from coarse jocularities, with his own life if need were. Naturally he was not aware of the point of insignificance, or of extinction, to which Adelina had at once fallen in the old man's mind in view of this larger game. Suspecting that she had fled on before to give the alarm of his visit, directly his eyes fell upon the figure of the fiddler old Crozier forgot even his indignation at that. Here was the prize for which his soul hungered; in the

actual existence of which no amount of block-headism had been able to cause his confidence to waver. He thought of nothing else.

In the meeting of those two glances lay a whole volume of physiognomy. Confident in the substantial reserve of human nature to which he had probed on the last occasion, Felton's expression was the reverse of abject. Crozier's consistent harshness to his daughter had established a deep fund of resentment against him in the fiddler's mind, but any required amount of dissimulation was not now a strange demand upon him. The old farmer, on the other hand, never dissembled, was constitutionally incapable of any such adaptation, and it was only the unmistakable announcement of this fact on his features which in any way restrained Felton's display. He was, in fact, just a little in doubt as to how he was to proceed, a state of uncertainty which Crozier's behaviour did not long permit.

"So I hae run ye down, ye brock," was the latter's exclamation, when he had viewed his anta-

gonist from head to foot. "To be three times made a fool o' by the like o' ye!" And a great gust from the farmer's lungs seemed to disperse the rest of the suggestion.

Felton perfectly understood it, and recognised that it was not to be met by any species of artifice known to him.

"I will explain the whole of my position to you," said he, in his natural voice, at once giving in to the inevitable.

Crozier still stared at him, as though yet astounded at the transformation of which Brett had been capable.

"Ay, ay, ye'll hae time to do it, I'll warr'nd ye, for ye'll away wi' me to Bygate the noo."

"You, at any rate, are not the man to misunderstand the anxiety of—"

"Na, na, I'll no misunderstand ye. I ken the like o' ye ower weel, and I ken nicely how to deal wi' ye."

"You'll not fling me back to an inhuman world," exclaimed Felton excitedly. "I have only come

here to escape from all the toils of an unnatural and hideous existence—an existence which—”

“I’ll tackle ye mysel’,” interposed the old man, impatient of the digressions in which his antagonist was trying to indulge. “I’ll get ye out o’ the toils o’ the existence ye ta’k about, never fear. I ken nicely how to dea it.”

“But it is impossible without first allowing me to explain my position.”

“What the deil do ye want to explain, man?” roared Crozier. “Hae ye no swindled me out o’ twae thousand pounds? Hae ye no swindled other folks out o’ mony another thousand? Hae ye no swindled the varry deevil himsel’ out o’ whatever there is in ye that is due to him? And hae ye no made a great big muckle fool o’ Maxwell Crozier, wha—”

“I have done none of these things,” cried out Felton in a loud voice.

“Then ye ca’ me a liar as weel’s a damned fool, is that it?” retorted the farmer, approaching the other with physical intent.

"I call ye neither one thing nor the other," Felton replied, drawing back to the wall, and extending his hand before him. "I want to call you a friend, a brother—a reasonable creature, if you will only permit me. For God's sake let me speak!"

"What more can you say than I ken already? The job's no to be mended by wawds."

"Hear me, none the less. It is just possible that some ray of new light may pierce your stark insensibility. I am not a common felon. I never have been such—never at any moment of my life."

There was something in the man's attempted self-defence, attended as it was by vehement gesture, and even muscular contortion, which suddenly appealed to the old man's sense of the ludicrous, and led him to plant his hands firmly against his sides and explode with loud and deep laughter. The digression gave Felton the opportunity he needed, and by the time Crozier had so far quelled his mirth as to be ready to renew the assault, the fiddler was already well into his philosophical argument.

"It is a matter for infinite pity rather than abuse," he went on. "What possible physical anguish is there comparable to the spiritual? Yet I venture to assert that if you saw me now, yes, even the despised, the vituperated one, writhing at this minute in the agonies of physical pain, you, even you, my sworn adversary, would be the first to hold out a hand of assistance to me. Why, then, is it so impossible to extend even common tolerance to my spiritual ailments? I did not die to the world that I might reap gross and ignoble advantage. I went through what you will call that piece of jugglery solely that my regeneration might be the more complete—"

"Mercy on us, you might as well ha'd my lugs under the Woolup Linn, yonder," roared the old man, staring at his prisoner in bewilderment. "I'll no deal in wawds I tell ye."

"—That I might with the more absolute sincerity be dead to my past," went on Felton, without pausing to breathe even, "and with the ardour of a new existence, develop my higher

course. I have never before been my real self—”

“That’s the varry forst word o’ truth I—”

“Never have I had my foot upon the ground of fact. If my own material comfort had been a motive, should I have chosen this kind of life for my foundation—”

“Ha’d your din, I tell ye!” vociferated the farmer. “Never fand yoursel’, do ye say? My sartie, but I’ll help ye. I ken how to dea it, I tell ye. Do you think to do it by fiddling?”

“I only do that to gain the small amount of bread that I require. It is not a kind of work that draws the mind off higher considerations.”

Exasperated by this protracted argument, Crozier without another word made a dash at his prisoner, but was nimbly warded off, whilst a fresh torrent of words burst around him. Felton’s ill-judged tactics had exercised an effect exactly opposite to that he had looked for. The old farmer’s temperament was of the strictly objective kind, and at his age not likely to be modified by the

efforts of anybody. Attempts at it were certain to be construed as dire insult, as a hint that he needed outside help to make up his mind. Such an imputation at the hands of Felton was at any rate intolerable. The second time he pinned his victim with unerring aim.

"What is your intention?" exclaimed the latter, glaring at him.

"I'll show ye soon enough. Come away noo."

At the sounds of scuffling, Adelina ventured from her concealment, so far at least as to stand in the doorway and stare at them. Felton's eyes fell upon her, and the expression of her face shocked him.

"Get off me," he shouted in the despair which that glimpse of his daughter inspired, with the sudden movement once more releasing himself from Crozier's clutches. But before he could take one step towards the girl, he was again secured, and she had withdrawn into the scullery. "I will help the girl. Will you see her die before my eyes?"

"Nae fear, my man. She has l'arned the tricks ower weel. Doon, noo!"

Muscularly, Felton was no match for the farmer, but in the frenzy into which he was worked he turned upon him with animal ferocity. A scuffle ensued, and was only ended by the fiddler being felled to the ground by a blow, and lying there apparently stunned. In an instant Crozier had snatched a rope from a nail on the wall, and, by the time his antagonist had recovered, his hands were securely bound. In a moment, aware of his helplessness, rage gave way to vehement emotion, and he implored the old man on his daughter's behalf. To all the piteous representations Crozier was deaf, well assured that Lina could take care of herself. He did not even trouble himself to examine her condition, but having now finally secured his prisoner, he dragged him out into the snow, and hoisting him on to the horse before him, rode away towards Bygate in a triumphant frame of mind.

When there had been unbroken silence in the cottage for some time Lina again ventured forth. With a timid glance around, she came into the

deserted room, and first of all raised up the chair which had been overturned in the conflict. Then, seeing the snow whirling in through the open doorway, she shut that, and returned to a standing position on the hearthstone. There was a singular listlessness in her movements and a dull vacancy in her eyes, varied only by an occasional shiver, which perceptibly affected her whole frame. At length she revived a little, and tears silently trickled down her cheeks. It was then that she seemed to regather consciousness of her condition, for, putting her thin white hands to her breast, she continued the unhooking of her frock, which had been so rudely interrupted. She accomplished it at last, and the wet garment was literally peeled from her with some difficulty. The exertion of this seemed to exhaust her. After a pause she sat down in the chair, thus to continue her labour of removing the saturated clothes, but even still it proceeded slowly and listlessly, at length ceasing altogether.

With her hands idle in her lap, Adelina sat there for a long time, gazing into the fire. The

wind moaned occasionally round the house, but all else was hushed, as it is by snow, even in a quiet locality. The flakes themselves fell more lightly, no longer giving their soft tap upon the window pane. But not even a louder noise would have disturbed the girl now. Although her eyes remained open, there was no animation in her face, if the features were less pale than before. Eye was as dull as ear, so that Lina was unaware that the small window became suddenly darkened, just as she had failed to observe some fresh sounds which had preceded it. If she had turned her face at that moment to the window she would have seen other features outside almost touching the glass in their anxiety to distinguish all that was within; and had she heard those other sounds she might possibly have known them for the muffled tread of a horse's hoofs in the snow.

Sibbald had just arrived, the startling directions with which he had been dismissed by the distracted Felton having added to his speed. Discerning the odd figure quite stationary in the

chair, the youth hardly knew how to construe it, so he leapt promptly from his horse and entered. The movements did not arouse Lina; she did not at first even turn her head. This sufficiently alarmed Crozier, and he muttered her name. Then she looked at him.

After his morning interview with Jenniper, he had posted here in a mood of purely dispassionate benevolence. Common sympathy had revolted once again against his father's brutal methods, wholly ignorant of course of the extent to which they had been that day enacted. The slight account only which Isabel had been able to give of the matter afforded no clue to the strain which the afflicted girl had undergone. Felton's appeal had been so obviously exaggerated by his emotion. Indeed, nothing had prepared Sibbald for a spectacle such as this. At first he felt impatient, attributing Lina's condition to merely hysterical dejection. He even spoke sharply. But with the words he uttered his eyes were opened, or at anyrate his heart was touched, and he stepped quickly forward.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO WAYS.

A WAVE of pure human emotion broke over Sibbald when he realised to the full the pitiable plight in which Adelina lay. Prudential considerations, arrogant revolt against the tender births of his soul, a strictly formulated outlook,—all were over-ridden by this gush of fervent compassion for a pale and suffering girl. Without so much as an instant's conscious examination of his instinct, scarcely clad as she was, the youth ardently pressed her to his heart, sensible that in the movement his whole soul went out to her beyond recall.

Some small measure of this vital warmth seemed to be communicated to the helpless figure, for as Sibbald held her face some inches away from him to gaze into it, the features and neck of Adelina

were suffused with a roseate tint like that of evening clouds in the east. A smile, too, passed over her, and eager ears caught the murmured sound of "Darling boy." It was, however, some minutes more before Lina seemed to enter with any consciousness into the situation, and then but with a partial comprehension. All she showed was a supreme content in the tender hands of Sibbald, and a willingness to resign herself utterly to their care.

Heedless, nay, mainly ignorant of possible criticism of his action, the Scholar rapidly advanced to practical requirements. Failing completely in his efforts to get the girl to pay the concluding attentions to herself, with a swift and gentle hand he immediately undertook them. When he had filled a kettle with water, and put it on the fire, he lifted the chair with Lina upon it nearer to the hearth. Then taking a blanket from the bed, he put it to warm, and wrapped his patient in it, when he had removed the remainder of her wet clothes. As soon as the water was

hot, he himself chafed her feet in it, using a zinc bath which he found, for the purpose. This last treatment brought Lina more fully to herself, and as she lay back in her chair, gradually regathering consciousness, her eyes rested placidly upon the crown of Sibbald's head, until he raised his face, and brought over all her features a rich glow of confusion.

"You are better?" said he, fixing an ardent, anxious gaze upon her, but otherwise quite calm and possessed.

Lina only nodded, and drew the blanket right over her head and face.

When she was thus far restored, Sibbald gave what attention he could to the bed, and he had very soon lifted her like a child, and wrapped her up warmly within it. From this position Lina ventured to look out, and seeing him standing just beside her, she murmured something about his goodness. He then blushed, but without any other alteration of his features. He seemed about to speak, but checked himself, or was unable to articu-

late the words he wanted. Turning away, he seemed to surmount some impulse, and when he next spoke, there was no unusual tenderness in his speech.

"You'll be all right when your clothes are dry. But what brought you into such a condition?"

Lina narrated as briefly and coherently as she could the facts of the old man's discovery and its consequences, leading up to an account of her flight. For this Sibbald scolded her, declaring it might have been her death, and for which there was no adequate cause.

"But I thought you were here," pleaded she, quite artlessly.

"And can't I take care of myself? Are you to put your life in danger to look after me?"

There was some of the old sharpness in the tone, which smote Lina too hardly in her present state, but which Sibbald did not observe. She could only mutter a timid apology, which still the youth did not take with all the grace he might.

"There is no excuse. Is it any kindness to me

to injure yourself?" he went on churlishly, busying himself about the fireplace. "Whoever was here, you had no business to take—"

A slight sound checked him, and, looking quickly to the bed, he saw the tears silently falling down the girl's flushed face.

"I am not angry, Lina," said he, stepping to her side.

"You are unkind to me. You are not like you used to be. . . . Oh, everybody is unkind to me and I—I feel so wretched."

To whisper his soothing words to her, Crozier leant his face against hers, and felt it burn him like a glowing coal. Then he could overcome his tender impulses no longer. His heart realised intolerably the blank wretchedness of the girl, and he longed to pour the whole of his fierce vitality into that desolate void. Lina felt the flood closing around her, and for a moment it recalled a full glow of life, in the vehemence of which she flung her arms around him, and kept his face imprisoned there beside her own.

When at length Sibbald was liberated, he knew that she was ill,—far worse than anything he had hitherto suspected. Merely waiting for her clothes to dry and then taking her back on the horse before him, he saw would by no means be the solution. Indeed, it was some time before he could see any solution whatever of the difficulty. Symptoms of a dangerous feverishness were already apparent to his keen and tender eye, and he was obliged to recognise that the inevitable became only more complex by every moment's delay.

“You feel no better, darling?” he asked, standing beside her. “Then I must instantly go for help.”

She pleaded that he would not leave her, but he moved away and secured the door which gave access to the scullery at the back. He was then again by her side, and by dint of tenderest entreaty and persuasion obtained a promise that she would lie still until he returned. The incoherent and impetuous way in which she set him off gave Sibbald the fear that he had already delayed too long, but when he had locked the cottage door, pocketed the key, and

got once to horse, he permitted no further impediment, despite the state of the skies.

He rode directly to Angryhaugh, where he surprised Jenniper and her father at dinner. The limited intercourse of his daughter with the household of Bygate had not been viewed by Curle with any approbation, for he shared to the full the prejudices of the district.

Sibbald, however, imparted such a genuine tale of distress on Adelina's behalf, and in such an impassioned and convincing manner, that common humanity at once obtained a ready consent to Jenniper's going to Whinburnhope to act the Samaritan, in case the doctor would not allow the invalid to be removed. So persuasive had Crozier's behaviour been, and so urgent his face, that neither Curle nor his daughter had paused to question him as to the cause of these strange things. Jenniper promised to meet Sibbald's dogcart at the road below, and then the youth sped off to the doctor at Crawston.

In little more than half an hour Sibbald took up Jenniper from the snow. As they rode along he gave her such explanation of the incidents as seemed

necessary, only obtaining a promise of secrecy from her. Felton, he admitted, had proved to be a relative of both his and Adelina's in disguise, without explaining more minutely the intimacy of the relationship. All the rest of his conversation he devoted to the condition of Adelina, in such a way as to cause no little astonishment to his dispassionate hearer, who not many hours before had conversed with him, indirectly, on the same topic, but with somewhat different results.

Immediately the cottage door was opened, Sibbald ran impetuously in and leaned over the silent figure in the bed. The movements somewhat agitated Lina, but she did not show signs of fully recognising him. None the less, Sibbald pressed her to his heart once more, and gave her face a long silent kiss. Jenniper stood within the doorway to behold him.

When the doctor had been and left instructions, Crozier had yet again to depart to obtain the necessaries which were recommended, for, as had been expected, all movement for the invalid was pronounced to be out of the question.

It was indeed evening before the Scholar had fully completed the tasks which devolved on him, and was preparing to leave Whinburnhope for the night. He drew Jenniper aside, and in a tone of much emotion and solemnity, confided Lina to her care.

"I need not now tell you what my feelings are towards her," he concluded, frankly receiving Jenniper's gaze. "I love her, and of course intend to marry her. She shall not suffer this intolerable wretchedness any longer. Watch her carefully, my dear lass, and remember that again you have done for me what nobody else in the whole of Braiddale would have done for me or for her."

Jenniper did not reply, but put her hand into the one he extended, and bade him a plain good-night.

When Sibbald had stabled his horse for the last time, he went over to the house, thoroughly fatigued with his exertions, physical and spiritual, and hungry from a day's obliviousness of meals. He had but just sat down to the repast, which Isabel had placed ready for him, when his father came out. At the elder's summons he immediately rose and followed him.

In the parlour was Felton, cowering in a chair, his hands free (for his face was partly hidden by one of them arched over the temple), but, as Sibbald did not observe, his feet bound. The man did not move or show any sign of heeding what was going on about him, not even when the farmer's voice burst forth.

"You ken that man?" said he, pointing to the culprit, addressing but not turning his eyes directly upon his son.

"I do."

"And ye daur to tell me that ye do? . . . Did ye no promise to help me in the search for him?"

"I did," was the steady reply; "and if I had found him I should have told you."

"How could ye ken him then without finding him?"

"He gave himself up to me."

"Will ye turn a lawyer on me?" fired the elder, in a rage at such subtle distinctions. "Ye ha'd it less a crime, then, to deceive me than to gie up the secret of a rogue who has swindled me."

"No, father, I don't," replied Sibbald with un-

accustomed fervour, the emotion which the day's doings had stirred up in him still active. "It has been intolerable to me to deceive you, and nothing but your inhuman anger has made it even so far possible. Had I known any way to make you amenable to reason, I should only too gladly have revealed all to you. But how could I put any human creature into your power when you have treated even a girl in the way you have treated Adelina?"

His father did then look fully at him, but it was getting dusk, and the old man stood with his back towards the light, so that the expression of his face was not visible. Sibbald did not know that Felton's eyes also were now raised to him.

"When did you l'arn to preach to me, my man?" demanded the farmer, as it seemed with some difficulty of utterance.

"I have never learned. It is forced out of me—ground out of me like water out of a stone."

"A tarr'ble soft yane," muttered the old man, turning round and taking a stride or two over the

carpet. "But I ken how it is,—ou ay, I ken nicely how it is. Mercy on us, what'll we come tae?" Then he stopped abruptly, and in a voice of thunder bade his son leave him. "Ha'd away out o' my sight! . . . Away, I tell ye!" For Sibbald paused, but at this second outburst he was gone, and the old man turned himself towards the window.

That he had somehow interfered with the object his father had in view in summoning him, was clear to Sibbald, and more than usually meditative, he thought of it as he hastily devoured his food, until it was displaced by the return of the image which had affected him so powerfully at Whinburnhope that day.

From that evening Sibbald knew that his father avoided him. A singular problem was presented by such unusual tactics on the part of the old man, and it would have considerably exercised the mind of the younger had he not been so fully occupied elsewhere. As it happened, the freedom which such action afforded him was so particularly

needful that he simply took that result with contentment. Adelina was, as he expected, plunged into a dangerous illness, and as an improvised lover Sibbald's trials were, perhaps, disproportionate to his reputation for rigorous judgment, and dry, churlish attainments.

To Jenniper he was a puzzle. She had been drawn into a post of unsuspected difficulty, but had never wavered. Ill-adapted as she might have seemed to such employment, she gave up her days and nights to the exactions of nursing with a silent assiduity, which commanded even occasional recognition from the pre-occupied Sibbald. Such recognition she could take lightly; it was the observation of his general demeanour which most engaged her. Every day would he ride over to Whinburnhope with his anxious inquiry, putting it after a time in the form of a silent glance merely, to which she often as silently responded. When the very worst was over he would often stay at the house for an hour or more, simply gazing into the fire, then turn and start

away abruptly. To one still in calm command of all her faculties such conduct was inexplicable, but she came daily to admit a growing curiosity in the observation of it. When, after about three weeks' time, the invalid herself again entered into the consideration, there was yet again a change.

Towards the end of January the snow had begun to melt rapidly, and now the fresh mornings with a hint of spring gleamed over hill and valley. So it became a habit with Jenniper to meet Sibbald at the door on his arrival, and bid him go in whilst she sauntered off to the brae or took her can down to the water; natural enough under the circumstances, but Sibbald failed to see the reason of it. If he wanted to kiss Adelina, or to talk tenderly to her, he found not the smallest restraint from Jenniper being present at it. He at length resolved to tell her so. One morning as he came out, before putting his foot into the stirrup, he looked around, and saw the figure some two hundred yards off up the water by an alder tree. As he advanced, Jenniper came on to meet him.

"Why do you always go away now?" he asked, before the other could make her premeditated remark.

"Perhaps because I like badly to see folks make fools o' themselves," was the prompt reply.

"But we don't make fools of ourselves."

"So you may think, but—"

"I won't hear it, my lass," interposed Sibbald fiercely. "I used to think so myself, but now I *ken* that one grain of human feeling is worth all in the world besides. Aren't the winds cold enough without your gan'ing up to the top of the heugh to seek 'em? What for should you spurn the bit o' bield God has gien to you?"

"I dinna spurn it," said Jenniper with unexpected calm and seriousness.

"But if we are fools you must do."

"Then you arena fools. But shouldna I be yane if I tried to creep into your bield?"

Sibbald looked into her face, but only met that frank smile there.

"Now ha'd away, and just let me gan my ain gate," was her ultimate dismissal of him.

As Crozier rode homewards the contrast of the two faces he had left engaged him more pointedly than it had ever done before, but only to the emphasising of his sentimental tendencies. Adelina's features, as chastened by illness, suggested the angelic, the purely spiritual which constituted Sibbald's estimate of womanhood at that time, and they satisfied utterly this new craving. No hint of tenderness entered into his survey of Jenniper,—no spiritual satisfaction. She was not associated with the ideal of woman in his mind at all. A generous kindness he felt towards her, if only for her manifold services, but such as he might have felt for any helpful comrade, man or woman.

"Whatever has he been talking to you about all this time?" asked Lina languidly, as Jenniper entered.

"He wants me to help at the love making."

"What do you mean?"

The other disclosed Sibbald's suggestion.

"Silly boy! But you won't, Jenniper, will you?"

"I rather think I shall. I shall learn something, daur say, for when my turn comes."

But Adelina's strength proved unequal to jocularity, so Jenniper had to turn to a more sober tone.

From that time, however, the invalid's strength returned to her, and the question of her companion's liberation had to be mooted. Lina had not ventured as yet to put a single word to Sibbald about affairs at Bygate, and he had not volunteered any, but the girl had felt a positive dread at the prospect of returning to that former bondage after these few sweet weeks of tender handling. For some time she nursed her anxiety in secret (to the detriment of her improving health), in the hope that Sibbald would break the silence for her, but he would not. At length the day came when she got the better of her timidity.

There was a burst of exquisite weather in the middle of March, when the dippers sang blithely at their sport about the burn, and the call of the first curlew rang clear from the slope of Hawk Knowe. The doctor had given permission to go out for half an hour the next day, "if such a day as this." Such a day it proved, and Sibbald was there at the time appointed.

"No, she can't come," said Lina, as she went out on the youth's arm, for the latter had cast a curious glance at Jenniper as they went to the door.

Sibbald was about to speak, but checked himself and went on.

"You can't have both of us, you silly darling boy," observed Lina, when they were in the sun.

"You seem to forget what she has done for you."

"Not at all. . . . But if you love her more than me I'll go back and she shall come."

For an instant the old impulse arose in Sibbald, and he would have bidden her take that course ; but a glimpse of the flushed, delicate face subdued him, and, taking hold of the tips of her fingers, which were under his arm, he went silently on.

Jenniper in the meantime was standing idly by the cottage window watching them depart. At certain moments during these late days you might have caught an unusually pensive expression upon her face which brought out wholly new and unsuspected hints of character. It was such a moment now, and the expression referred to was allowed to assume a

degree of intensity surpassing all before. From mere thought it passed to a more definite emotion, for the smooth forehead was allowed to contract and the eyes to give forth a flash of their hidden fire. As the pair got further off, Jenniper moved to keep them still under observation, but had scarcely done so before she turned her eyes sharply in another direction. Just outside the glass they encountered the stare of Oliver Hislop, and there remained. The features outside winced and disappeared, and there was a knock at the door. Jenniper paused with her hand to her breast for an instant, then went and opened to him.

"Have I no forbidden you to come here?" she said, shooting him with a glance before which he had cowered before.

"Ay, ay, I ken a' about that ; but I'll just—"

"But you winna," and the girl repelled the movement he made to enter. With a furious oath the man had clutched her by the throat, and by placing one foot behind her brought her to the ground before Jenniper had prepared for such an attack. He saved her from falling with her full weight, but when down

secured her there, so that resistance was impossible. Feeling the completeness of her disadvantage, the girl did not even condescend to struggle, but after one glance at his threatening features bent over her, she closed her eyes and lay still. The next moment she felt herself free.

"Why will you drive me mad?" said the man bitterly, struck with remorse at his brutal attack the moment he had looked into the face upon the ground. "I didna come to see you at all."

He went to help her up, but she refused the assistance.

"Then gan about the business you came for."

He seemed about to slink away agreeably to this summary dismissal, when he turned abruptly round.

"I'll tell ye, daur say. I—"

"I winna hear it. Get out!"

This time Jenniper was fully prepared, and as she stood with her fist clenched even the keeper might have hesitated to renew the attack. But whatever his feelings, he turned them into a sneer and a scowl, and departed.

"Why do you never give me any news?" said Lina, just as her companion was pointing out to her two sea-gulls that had called to them from a great height. "Yes, yes, I see them." But she did not so much as look up.

"Because I don't read the newspaper."

"You unkind thing!" And Sibbald felt a considerable pinch upon his muscular arm.

"Then what am I to say? How can I get you news any other way?"

"You know what news I mean. You know what brought me here. . . . What *is* happening?"

"At Bygate? . . . Oh, I was going to tell you that I don't think you had better go back there at all."

Adelina's astonishment and delight sparkled out of her bright eyes—preternaturally bright after her illness.

"Darling Sib, I forgive you all for that. . . . Oh, you are a pet, and I am so awfully horrid to you. I don't mean to be. I know you are always trying to do something nice for me. But do—do tell me what has happened."

"It is no use telling you," replied he sternly.

"But it is nothing dreadful?"

"I think you have gone through quite enough there without getting mixed up in anything more," was the evasive reply.

"No, no, dear, I don't want to go back—really I don't; but do tell me all about it. . . . Do they fight?"

"Lina, my sweet little lass," Sibbald began in an altered tone, looking at her face; "I came here to spend a golden half hour with you—to tell you what you have become to me—how all the world is changed. . . ."

"Yes, yes, darling, I know . . . but do just tell me what *has* happened at Bygate."

Sibbald was about to speak again, when he turned abruptly round. The sound of somebody whistling a popular music-hall ditty which the winds had brought even thus far had at that instant reached his ear, and, perhaps suspecting or recognising the performer's tone, he turned with no uncertain expression on his face. Scarce twenty yards off approached Oliver Hislop with an impudent, jaunty air. The

man's inopportune appearance was so intolerable that Sibbald's tongue slipped into violence.

"What the devil do you want here?" he demanded as he turned upon the intruder.

"Not you, anyway," was the imperturbable reply.

It was with a conscious effort that Crozier restrained himself from knocking the man down, and, no doubt, had he known of the recent episode in the cottage, he would have been spared the irksome repression.

"I want to speak to this young lady."

"Then speak from where you stand, for if you come two paces nearer I'll leave you no breath to speak with."

"That's no my way. What I've got to say is for her and for nobody else, and I shall only say it to her alone."

"Then you can go about your business, for you'll not speak to this young lady alone."

"That's as she pleases."

"Don't, dear!" whispered Adelina. "I'm not afraid of him. Let me hear what he has to say."

“Not whilst I am here,” was Sibbald’s retort. “If you wish to hear him I will go.”

“I do wish—but don’t go far. He will only be a minute.”

Such, however, was not Sibbald’s method when incensed. He had come in tremulous tenderness to disclose more fully than he had been able hitherto all his desire towards Adelina, to gain her approval of all the plans he had laid for her, instead of which all his warmth had to recoil on his own head in the form of a pelting shower of hail. Lina had already loosed his arm, so, without word or look to either of them, Sibbald was gone.

She easily saw that he was angry, but, secure in her power to reconcile, she turned to Hislop to appease her consuming curiosity.

CHAPTER V.

CUTTING THE KNOT.

THE keeper had not observed the current of events around him without developing a considerable fund of curiosity, if of nothing further, on his own behalf. Whether with, or without, reason he took to himself much of the credit of recent affairs at Bygate, and although far from discerning any intelligible sequence in the results, he could at least see that these were mischievous, and was so far satisfied. He was by no means without hope of gaining more light upon the very obscure subject, for fortune seemed to be favouring him in several particulars, and he was not the man to make the least of a heaven-sent opportunity.

“Is it about Bygate you want to speak to me?”

asked Lina with undisguised eagerness, before Sibbald had got many paces away.

"Ay, ay, ye'll want to ken how they gan on, daur say," replied Hislop with a grin of low familiarity. "It's a tarr'ble strange affair."

"What is?" gasped the girl.

"Thae doings of aa'd Crozier and the fiddler."

"But I have heard nothing of what is going on. Do tell me everything."

"Does he no tell you, then?"

"He has not thought me well enough yet. But," continued Lina in a more dignified tone, as though suddenly awaking to the fact of her too great condescension,—“but what is it you want with me? Have you some message?"

"Oh, dinna be in a hurry, and dinna put on airs wi' me, or ye'll get just nothing at all out of me, hinny. I have a message for you, I'll no deny, but you'll just answer me twa-three questions before I begin on't."

"I shall certainly answer you nothing whatever—" Adelina began in resentment.

"Varry good, I'll say good-day to you, then, *miss*." And the man actually turned as though to leave her.

Tears started to the girl's eyes as she summoned him again with contrition, and, of course, Hislop was immediately beside her.

"Ay, ay, then we'll get forward. Then just tell me what ye ken o' yon Felton."

"I only know that he is an uncle of mine, who came here in disguise, and that Mr. Crozier says he has been wronged by him."

"Wronged by him? Ay, but in what way? That's just what I would be at."

"I think it is about money, chiefly, but I don't know any more about it than you do yourself, perhaps not so much."

"He'll be hiding here frae the police, likely?"

"I don't think so," exclaimed Lina in genuine alarm. "Oh, it can't be. I have not heard a word about the police. What makes you think so?"

"Well, a man 'ud be a darned fool to be treated like he is yonder unless he had some good reason for putting up wi't."

"Why—do they fight?" Hislop laughed.

"Not ower mony would fight wi' aa'd Crozier twice. The fighting's too much on yen side, you ken."

"But he doesn't beat him?"

"That's tarr'ble more like the thing. The poor devil's just a common slave there entirely a'thegither."

"But why doesn't he run away?" fired Adelina.

"He canna dea't, for his legs are band wi' an iron chain."

In her physical weakness the girl had been hovering on the brink of irrepressible emotion throughout the interview, and this gave her the final touch. She burst into tears, and allowed herself to fall against a birch tree by which they were standing. Throwing a hurrid glance towards the cottage, and seeing all clear (Crozier's horse even being no longer at the door), Hislop took the girl in his arms as if to support her, and pressed his face close to hers. However overpowered the previous instant, this was enough to arouse Adelina, and exerting her full strength

unexpectedly, she hurled the man off and darted from the place. Recovering his balance with a laugh, he set off after her, and came to her side before she had taken many paces.

"You have no got your message," said he in a jeering tone. But Lina's curiosity was satisfied,—at any rate dead in her, and thrusting him away, she hurried forward, panting for breath. Supposing that nothing farther was at that time to be made of her, Hislop thrust a piece of paper upon her, and set off in another direction.

"Sibbald, why didn't you wait for me?" stammered Adelina, as she entered the cottage. "All this is—!" and sank in the chair. But when she had cast her eyes all around her, and saw only Jenniper, who disregarded her presence, she whimpered, "Where is he?" Running again to the door, neither Sibbald nor horse was to be seen, so Lina returned to her chair, and wept outright.

When the girl was at length calmer, she saw that she was alone in the room, and the thought of the paper which she still held in her hand

returned to her. She at once opened it, and recognised her father's hand, although the pencil writing showed the awkward conditions under which it had been scribbled. This is what she made out:—

“With unspeakable thanks I hear that you are better. Upon no account return here whatever you may do. It would kill me to see you in this bondage. Take possession of all my things, but send the fiddle here secretly by Sibbald, and tell him to give it to the hind. It will be of use to me. I cannot get a single word with Sibbald, but—”

Here the writing abruptly ended, indicating some interruption which Lina could but vaguely guess at. But she had got glimpses enough of the evil conditions under which her father laboured, and for a few minutes they plunged her into very genuine distress. It was not, however, in the girl's nature to expend any great amount of emotion on another's

behalf, so she was soon again recalled to troubles of her own. Had Sibbald really gone? Wasn't he only trying to frighten her for that petulant opposition to his wishes? With this thought, growing instantly to conviction, she went out, and met Jenniper returning to the door.

"Where is he, Jennie? Do tell me." Jenniper only looked at her and passed in.

"Is it Mr. Sibbald you're wanting?" she at last exclaimed, in return to the other's persistent entreaty. "He'll be at Bygate by now."

"Oh, do run after him! . . . I must speak to him at once. . . . Won't you? Jenniper, darling! . . . Then I must go myself. . . ."

Jenniper interposed with much firmness, and simply put her companion back into the chair.

"He's on horseback I tell you. You couldna' get to the end of the burn. . . . Now be still, Lina!"

In her own way the stronger at length succeeded in bringing Adelina to some degree of reason, or, at any rate, composure, and then by tactful handling, got at the cause of her disquiet. All the girl's con-

cern now centred in the offence she had given Sibbald and her anxiety for instant reconciliation.

"Dinna fret; he'll be back soon enough," was the burden of her friend's consolation, and in which Lina had at last to acquiesce.

None the less, as the day wore on, the invalid's anxiety returned at frequent intervals, and with still growing intensity when Sibbald's customary hour the following morning failed to bring with it his appearance. By noon she could be appeased no longer, and if only with the object of getting an hour or two's respite, Jenniper agreed to set off to Bygate in search of him.

As good fortune would have it, her journey was a shorter one. When she came to that part of the road which was usually crossed by anybody going from Bygate to the Foulburn, she saw a man on horseback descending the brae, whom she at once recognised as the person she was in pursuit of. He had seen her some time before, and was, as a matter of fact, regulating his own pace by that of the foot passenger, so that they should meet at the point

of intersection. As they approached, each examined the other's face as though to disclaim the opening of the conversation. Jenniper's eyes first gave way, and then Sibbald spoke.

"You too have left her?" The other looked up with quick inquiry.

"Why, have you?" But he didn't answer.

There was, however, a look of unaccustomed hardness in his features which Jenniper at once detected, and at which her spirit seemed to rise, for her own eyebrows twitched and her cheeks coloured.

"Your one grain of human feeling, then, is a mighty sma' one," exclaimed she with considerable emphasis and some scorn, whereat Sibbald stared. "Canna ye see that the poor lass is no strong yet, and that she hardly kens what she does? Are ye no prepared to meet with more than a breeze o' that sort on the journey ye are gaun? I'm sorry for the poor lass that will hae to gan along with you."

Sibbald continued to gaze into the animated face before him, no longer conscious of the disdain she

was pouring on himself, but simply struck by the mere features as he had never been before. At that instant she was no longer the Jenniper he had always known. He now perceived that she was a woman, and a singular thrill of admiration passed over him at the perception. With it he moved his eyes, and changed the direction of his horse's head.

"Ay, I'll go back with you," he said, and they walked on silently for some way, side by side.

But an unusual agitation possessed Sibbald. He could not talk to her or trust himself even to look at her. With his eyes fixed upon his horse's ears, he went forward through a shimmering haze in which all the world became distorted. Some fair female form, it is true, vaguely lured him onwards, but it would not assume any distinguishing characteristics. Where had been such vehement certainty and determination was all at once pitiful irresolution and doubt.

"I'll have to be leaving Whinburnhope," said Jenniper, when they had proceeded some distance thus.

"Ay." And again the plovers were tumbling

and calling around them, and the splash of the river came up from below.

"Lina might be moved now whilst the weather's fine," after another interval.

"Moved? . . . But she's no going back to Bygate."

The manner in which this was said silenced Jenniper, and she resolved to abandon her efforts until they reached Whinburnhope. When they arrived there she drew away, and Sibbald entered the house alone, apparently with some alacrity.

Adelina had heard the dull thud of the hoofs upon the turf, and was standing in the middle of the room to receive her visitor. Her colour was heightened, and with a careful arrangement of her hair as he liked it, and other such attentions as she knew well how to bestow, she looked charming. As Sibbald came in, though, there was just a suspicion of anxiety in her eyes, the effect of which decidedly enhanced her beauty. His expression was by no means promising, but the instant his eyes rested upon her they changed, and Lina immediately threw herself into his arms.

In a passionate embrace Sibbald felt all his grim uncertainty leave him. With his lips devouring that little ear, he eagerly assumed all the blame of their disagreement, abandoned himself utterly to the spiritual glow which the charms of womankind inspired in him. He knew nothing of contrasted faces, of varying degrees of intelligence under the woman's form. In Adelina he held womanhood to his heart, and felt a consuming satisfaction in the contact.

"No more, Lina; no more. The risk is too awful; the sunshine of life too short. Let us hurl the clouds away. You are mine, mine utterly; and having found you, one moment's absence is intolerable. You must come away with me for ever."

The youth's tongue was loosed effectually, and in a ceaseless flow of ardent words, he poured forth his whole heart as he had never done before to her or to anybody. Lina never spoke, but lay against his breast, listening with rapture to the play of the torrent about her.

"No, you shall not return there; not for an in-

stant. You shall go down to Crawston, and there remain until we are married."

"And then, dearest, we can—"

"Oh, we can see about it." They had got to the door, prepared to go out, and with these words Sibbald drew his companion into the sunlight.

"Why, there she is!" cried Lina, pointing to a solitary figure surmounting a rock which jutted up into the sky above them.

Crozier soon obtained the attention of Jenniper, and they watched her descend. In walking to and fro on the grass the project was revealed to her. Sibbald was to proceed forthwith to obtain accommodation in Crawston for Lina to complete her convalescence, and concurrently prepare for the crowning event of her life, which should be solemnised as soon as she herself deemed proper. Beyond that (as Jenniper pointedly noticed), Sibbald declined to go.

It seemed as though that circumstance shone like a dazzling sea before him, setting a limit to his vision.

In the evening Sibbald again returned.

During the days that followed there was an impetuosity about young Crozier which contrasted strongly with his characteristic calm. It might have seemed that he indulged his restlessness with a view to evading all possible reflection, so erratic was his energy. The dismantling of Whinburnhope unfortunately served him but a short time. Lina was comfortably housed at Crawston; Jenniper returned home; Felton's odds and ends were removed, and his fiddle safely secreted in the hind's cottage as he had desired. When this was done the Scholar had to content himself with simply riding to and fro.

It was about a month later that they were married at the church at Crawston. A simple, more or less surreptitious affair it was, that occasioned a great amount of gossip in the dale. Adelina thought with regret of her old ideals of this important ceremony, of one or two even at which she had acted as bridesmaid in the old days, but to her credit it must be confessed that she accepted the humiliation by no means ungraciously. She deemed herself passionately fond of Sibbald, and moreover the speed and

irregularity of the proceedings invested them with a certain amount of romance which was some small recompense for the absence of fashion. Moreover, with the utmost magnanimity her bridegroom took her at her ardent entreaty for a honeymoon to Tynemouth, replenishing her wardrobe lavishly for the occasion, and altogether behaving as a fond and conventional husband should do.

To her persuasions, however, that they should never return to Braiddale, Sibbald turned a deaf ear. Not at the most opportune moment could she ever extort so much as attention to such a proposal. Flatter him as she would as to his being buried, wasted in his employment on the hills, she could not make the smallest impression on him. Lina did not consider that for the moment ambition was absolutely extinct in her husband. For weeks his sole ambition had been to gain this exclusive love of a woman. He had gained it, and naturally his whole soul was expended in basking in the glorious radiance about him. Woman though she was, Adelina's love knew nothing of the intensely exalted

ideal which actuated that of her husband. By no means sensual in the lowest sense, yet in a slighter and paltrier Lina undoubtedly was exclusively so. A husband such as he was a flattering possession ; he tickled the vain fancy more effectually even in some respects than a young Quaysider of substantial prospects would have done.

Altogether it was a radiant expedition, and Sibbald certainly returned with all his sentimental developments confirmed and extended. He seemed to be expending in that brief time the whole fund of sentiment accumulated through all his past years of indifference to it. And yet if Adelina had been competent to discern it, she might have seen that there was a genuine human depth, and even pathos, in his vagaries which removed them from the limits of mere foolishness, within which perhaps some of her own were included. In spite then of all the bride's wishes, they returned to Crawston, and secured lodgings in a comfortable little house inhabited by the widow of a minister. Although on the heights of an extraordinary buoyancy, Sibbald came back

with a certain undergrowth of misgiving as to his future position at Bygate. In view of his father's singular temperament, and his emphatic behaviour towards himself since the capture of Felton, the youth had not disclosed to his parent any part of his intention with regard to Adelina. An inordinate pride, or at least stubbornness, was as much a possession of the son as of the father, so that although a certain amount of trepidation was inevitable, fear never entered into Sibbald's mind. It was the mere novelty of his situation that mainly affected him. Whatever his own position was to be, from the height he had now attained the Scholar had firmly resolved to make another attack upon what he could only regard as the absurdly ignominious position of his father. If Felton was to go to gaol, the young man concluded that he had better go, and not continue to enable a man of some intelligence to flounder in the depths of positive fatuity. Thus did the situation now appear to Sibbald.

To Adelina he had never darkened a single moment by the utterance of her father's name, nor

did he now. They reached Crawston one cloudy afternoon, and without mentioning his object, Sibbald set off when it was dusk on his voyage of discovery. After his journey, the sombre silence of the hills impressed him with a peculiar sense of solemnity, which was heightened by the grave aspect of the sky. In the twilight some curlews called to each other, and whilst yet half a mile away, Crozier heard the clear voice of a thrush, which he knew came from a tree at Bygate. Always open to natural impressions, he was, in his present condition, especially sensible of this twilight influence. For many weeks his life had been wholly severed from Bygate associations, but in a still more idealised form they now returned to him. Almost without thought he cast his eye across the valley and discerned a light. It occurred to him that it was Angryhaugh, and he paused to give a thought to Jenniper. How singularly remote from him she now appeared! Turning, there was the light of Bygate, and he went on.

With some caution Sibbald approached the place, for it was not his wish to be observed by his father

on this occasion. According to all precedent, the old man would be safe in the parlour at this time, and as a light was there, presumably he was so. Skirting the buildings, Sibbald came to the hind's cottage, and knocked.

"Hoot awa', man!" exclaimed the man who came to the door. "Who ever thought of seeing you again here awa'?"

The visitor went in, and the door was closed behind him. Sibbald was glad that the man chanced to be alone, and he sat down.

"Well, how do you gan on?"

"Ou! I'll hae to be awa'. I canna dea wi't. The maister's just gane clean daft."

"Na," continued the man in response to the other's inquiry. "It's no just ower the man Felton entirely a'thegither."

"Then it's over me?"

"That's what they think, daur say."

"But what—" Sibbald's fierce inquiry was checked by the sound of the door opening suddenly, and he started round. There stood Felton riveted to the

ground with amazement. When the man saw that his eyes really had not deceived him, he rushed forward, seized the youth's hand, and crushed it in both of his.

"Anything now, Sibbald," exclaimed he. "All—all is far better than I deserve. The fiddle, Jack, sharp!"

This front was so different from what Crozier had expected, that it was with difficulty he refrained from laughter. As Felton seized the instrument and fled, Sibbald heard his father's voice in the yard. But it died away, and the sound of the house door closed after them was audible. So puzzled was the youth by this extraordinary conduct that he immediately went out, and finding all still, went round to the parlour window. The blind was down, but he could hear the old man's voice, so he stood aside in the shade. He had not long to wait before the strains of the fiddle came dancing out into the night silence. Then Sibbald left.

There was altogether a more human suggestion in this glimpse of affairs at Bygate than he had ventured

to expect, and he pondered it as he strode the soft bent on his way to Crawston. None the less, he discovered from it how far his recent emotions and experiences had drawn him from that isolated and uncivilised mode of life. The awakening of human passion in him had acted as a leaven to his whole conscious system, and seemed to be subduing him without any effort, or even wish, of his own, to the normal restraints and aspirations of the general world. As he strode away he was aware of darkness and desolation behind him, whilst light and warmth beckoned him on before. He no longer felt this remote Bygate to be a *home*, as he had always regarded it hitherto. He even got so far as to wonder why he had so persistently ignored Lina's suggestion that they should not return. At this moment he felt that he could easily, even gladly, leave it. Self-consciousness was new to him, so that he was far from probing such suggestions to any depth. They simply came and flitted, leaving vague impressions and aspirations behind.

For a few days after this he did not repeat his

visit to Bygate. It was exquisite spring weather, so he roamed the hills with his wife in an opposite direction, and in a wholly idyllic manner. He had observed natural things sympathetically, merely as an out-door man without any thought of system or of use, and under these conditions he was able to expound his impressions in a very picturesque way. Although thus apparently careless as the larks which soared above them, Sibbald was in reality much puzzled as to what he was to do. His temperament was by no means wholly or even mainly contemplative. Contemplation as dissociated from action had never occurred to him, and was not likely to occur. So at last the necessary issue was reached.

He resolved that his father should decide for him ; that is, he determined upon one final attempt at the re-organisation of Bygate life. In the light which he had himself acquired, this, when seriously confronted, did not appear an impossible, nay, scarcely a difficult, task. Not only had emotion found development in him, but he believed expression also, and in prospect an imaginary interview with his father rose

distinct, or, so to speak, articulate, before him. Impassioned eloquence surged up within him with a vehemence which it seemed impossible that anything should withstand. In the sanguine buoyancy of youth, and this new vein, he not improbably suspected a similar hidden enthusiasm in his father, awaiting only to be aroused. Inarticulate, unemotional he had been himself until Adelina came with a tender hand to touch the strings. Undemonstrativeness, he could well think, was merely a surface quality of their family. Who should say but that beneath that old man's rugged exterior lay hidden a whole mine of generous ore? The idea once suggested, Sibbald, as he walked in the sun, had no difficulty in calling up positive examples to put its existence beyond the range of doubt. So it was he resolved upon this final attempt.

Early one of these spring mornings he went accordingly to Bygate. A brilliant atmosphere encouraged him in the enterprise, and indeed a certain newly-born carelessness of outlook bubbled up from underneath it, imparting a measure of in-

difference as to the result. Of downright sympathy for Felton he could muster very little. Pride on his father's behalf actuated him mostly. If, therefore, his strongest effort should fail in the result he looked for, why, things must just take their course, and he—must take his.

In the sloping field they ploughed for turnips, to the west of the house, Sibbald, as he approached, saw men at work, and could hear the chattering sea-gulls that hovered about the furrows. So far as he could distinguish at that distance, the figure engaged in raking up the "quickness" must be that of his father-in-law; the other was obviously the hind. The old man was not to be seen there. None the less, Crozier came to this field before going to the house. On reaching the gate he leaned on the top rail to look over, and a movement took his eyes sideways to where, not three yards away, the bondager was working under cover of the wall by which she had been hitherto hidden. The woman looked up with alarm at the apparition, then with sudden thoughtfulness pointed to a rick of straw hard

by. She said nothing, neither did Sibbald, but each understood.

For an instant the very distinct note of warning which this woman intended to convey to him engaged the young man's thoughts. It once more emphasised a notion which many things had served of late to confirm in him, namely, that he himself, or, at any rate, his recent conduct, had not been without some very apparent influence upon his father. He could not imagine it likely that the old man had spoken of his feelings; still, even these dependents showed themselves aware of them. So Sibbald knew that he must beware. Just as a wave of misgiving affected him, the dog which had come round the corner of the rick saw him at the gate, and ran forward to greet him. As Sibbald answered to the kindly reception, he became conscious of his father's eyes fixed upon him from beside the straw.

CHAPTER VI.

GHOSTS.

A MAN certainly of violent and unrestrained passions, yet was old Crozier no inhuman monster. In fact, if penetrating to the very core of him, it might have proved that the bulk of his excesses arose from a ferocious sense of humour rather than from any really depraved or malignant qualities. True, the sport of boys may be death to the frogs, still, so long as it is sport there is always the possibility of the intervention of better things.

In the master of Bygate, however, there was a quality more potent, and certainly more humanising, than this of reckless sport, and that was a deep, although unexpressed, attachment to his son. Sibbald was the only creature that he had ever for a moment stood in awe of, and this by sheer force of a certain rude dignity of character in the former, which acted in a vague way upon the old man. His

outbursts of rage against the youth were, of course, the surest indication of this emotion, for how could so primitive a nature evince its consciousness of restraint otherwise than by rebelling against it?

The discovery of Sibbald's treachery in the matter of Felton had acted powerfully upon this instinctive sense in the farmer. Not by straining it, but by emphasising intolerably its fundamental quality. Not a violent scene, but this protracted silence, had been the result. Since cutting short that interview by a summary dismissal from the room, old Crozier had not exchanged one word with his son. In a wholly characteristic way, the old man had visited much of the result of this upon the head of the unfortunate fiddler. Some outlet such an accumulation of force must have, and here was its inevitable direction. The resignation of Felton, obvious from the first, when once fully captured, had only incited Crozier to a still further display of his power.

The old man did not trouble to exercise his ingenuity in devising strange punishments for his victim. The tread-mill was his sufficient standard of

servitude, and so long as the employment was severe enough and incessant, it mattered not whether it took the form of carting dung, cutting chaff, or digging the soil for potatoes. A childish glow of satisfaction would soften the farmer's features at the sight of these sordid labours in progress, and he had even occasionally cracked a savage joke with, and at the expense of, the subject of them.

Before turning the corner of the rick, old Crozier's eyes had travelled to where Felton was occupied, and it was, therefore, with a thought of him that this sudden appearance of his son had to be met. From the immediate expression of his features it was clear that the two impressions did not blend harmoniously. When Sibbald straightened himself from his brief conversation with the dog, he saw his father standing motionless, in a very unnatural attitude of indecision. But, as their eyes met, the old man came forward. When he had opened the gate, Sibbald turned away and walked slowly in the direction of the house, pretty sure from the glance he had given him that his father would follow.

"What are you doing here?" exclaimed the farmer, in a tone immediately to arrest Sibbald, who accordingly turned to receive him.

"I came here to speak to you."

"I dinna want to speak to you, so you may gan to where you came from."

"I can't so easily give up my intention. I know that I have given you cause for anger and annoyance, but since what I have done affects myself only, I don't see why it should be so."

"Affects yoursel' only!" cried the elder, in angry astonishment. "Hae ye no shamed us a' and poisoned the breed? . . . Ay, poisoned the breed. . . . You might play the rogue—the damned rogue—with me, but—but I'll no speak to you."

The man turned away in obvious agitation—a betrayal of feeling which astounded Sibbald, but which also emboldened him.

"But I intend to speak to you," said he, stepping to his father's side. "I will not have the whole of your life destroyed for the want of a few words. Is what I have done possible to be compared with what

you have, what you are still, doing? Just think of it. Put the situation clearly before your eyes, and it is impossible that it should continue for a minute."

The young man's sudden earnestness and determination arrested the other, and he stood as though disconcerted before the extraordinary reproof.

"If I am a rogue and a fool, what do you make of yourself?" Sibbald went on, with undiminished fervour. "How do you make your dignity agree with the place of policeman or jail-keeper? How can you pretend to extinguish your intelligence—"

A glimpse of his father's face, turned suddenly towards him, checked Sibbald, and there was a moment's silence.

"Not another wawd," said the old man, with obvious difficulty, and as if surmounting some violent impulse. "Just gan away doon the water, and dinna set foot on Bygate braes again."

Sibbald looked, but instantly turned and went. The farmer strode away to the house. At some distance Sibbald found that the dog had followed

him, and it was with difficulty, with unmistakable harshness only, that he could drive him back.

Old Crozier went directly to the parlour, and locked himself in. Mere muttering now became articulate talk, as he paced to and fro across the floor in visible agitation.

"Poisoned the breed! . . . We're done—just a' done entirely a'thegither. . . . Ony creature in the whole universe but yon,—ony yane. But I wouldna hae believed it—nay, I canna believe it. The varry lad—I canna, canna mak' it oot."

After a good half-hour of this incoherent self-communing, the farmer stopped abruptly before his dark old bureau, and drawing some keys from the depth of his pocket, unlocked a drawer. He brought forth a brown paper parcel, and untied it at the table, when the contents proved to be deeds and legal documents,—a portion of those he had withdrawn so summarily from the lawyer's custody. He unfolded some, and pored over them with a singularly abstracted air. The word "breed" occasionally escaped him—"for the like o' yon—never!" "Nay, I dinna ken."

For Maxwell Crozier to be undecided evinced some extraordinary irritation. He folded and unfolded the crackling parchments, read a few words, and flung them aside. Over the Probate of his father's will he lingered longest. Ultimately he snatched a piece of paper, and sitting down to the table, began to write on it, copying the form spread out beside him. "This is the last will and testament of me, Maxwell Crozier of Bygate Stead, in the—" Then he stopped, threw all the papers up together again, locked them in the drawer, and went out.

Felton had to experience the altered mood of the old man for the remainder of that day. As is the case with unrestrained passions, in Crozier's judgment all his disorders resulted from an external cause. He was conscious of the rapid accumulation of evils of late days. He had lost two thousand pounds; he had been made a fool of; he had quarrelled with his lawyer; neglected his farm; and now, to crown all, had lost his very son, or what was perhaps rather the gist of the matter, had lost his savage family pride and exclusiveness. Through

this last his very house seemed to have fallen. Not only was the breed poisoned in his eyes, but every inch of his possessions was blighted. And the whole of this vast catastrophe was the direct, he did not doubt, the intentional, stroke of such an unnameable cur and scoundrel as—W. Collingwood Brett.

The fiddler's personal freedom had been considerably extended of late, for he had never shown the slightest desire to escape. None the less, he had been the more closely watched. When the old man, therefore, ordered him to the parlour in the evening in no uncertain tone, Felton could but speculate upon what it might portend. The papers were again upon the table, and he eyed them curiously, but looking up, he saw that the master's eye was also upon him.

"What do you want wi' them?"

"'Better is a handful with quietness than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit,'" replied Felton with provoking sententiousness.

"Look here, my man," returned the farmer with a strange restraint, or at least difficulty of utterance, "ye've maist ruined my intellects, and do ye ken that

ye'll go near to paying for 'em with your varry life if ye use wawds like yon to me again."

"It's not I that have done the mischief to you—"

"Will ye triumph over me to my face?" interposed the other, seizing the man by the shoulder and shaking him. "Ha'd your tongue, and dinna speak another wawd! . . . But ye'll no get it," went on Crozier, shaking his fist and glaring at the legal documents, "nor ony yane o' your breed, sae dinna think it. I'll die a pauper forst. I'll spend every farthing that I hac left, look you, and then I'll ken that it's a' safe. Do ye think I could lie straight in my grave wi' the knowledge o' siccan a breed gripping the Bygate braes and the gear o' the Croziers?"

"But surely your son—"

One blow had felled the rash advocate to the floor, and a torrent of vituperation burst over him.

"*My* son, you rieving idiot! I hanna got a son. The Croziers are a' deen, I tell you; you may hae the son, and be damned to you baith. But dinna think ye'll get him for naething, you snick-drawing varmint, you! I'll thrapple you if you speak, noo. . . ."

“I only want to work off—”

“Ye’ll work it off, dinna fear ; but I’ll be swindled by you and your son nae longer. Get up wi’ you ! If I’m to be the last of ’em I’ll hae my time, I’s warr’nd ye. . . . Ay, ay, I’ll hae my time, and I’ll die in the workhouse. I hae fand the way at last,” he went on, with what appeared a semblance of savage victory. “I thought ye had me in a hole, and my sartie, if it had been sae I’d hae cut your throat for you at the hinder end. But I ken the road nicely. I hae it noo, and I’ll gan it. Ay, ye shall gan too, man. Braw times we’s hae yonder; braw times. . . . This farm work does fine for your philosophy ye hae told me, daur say ?”

Felton gave a ready affirmative, astonished at the alteration in his antagonist.

“Ay, ay, ye could look after the like o’ this for me if I was—if I was—onywhere else, likely—”

“You would find me a faithful steward, only too anxious by rigid attention to your interests to redeem the—the losses you have incurred through my deplorable misfortunes.”

A demoniac guffaw burst from the parlour, and broke the stillness of the house to the furthest attic.

"Sorrtainly! . . . ye'd no choose to hae a wee bit holiday in the town, for the races, the theatre, or the like o' that?"

"I *died* to that," exclaimed Felton with genuine fervour. "The more completely to escape from all that poisonous froth did I take the extreme step which has led to our unhappy disagreements,—for that only, and not for the felonious—"

Another sally from the old man interrupted Felton's enthusiasm, and before he could renew it Crozier had left the room. In two or three minutes he returned with a clatter of footsteps behind him, and to Felton's astonishment the servant, Isabel, the hind and the female outworker entered the parlour at the heels of their master.

"Sit ye doon!" cried the farmer to his dependents, pointing to the chairs around them. "Ha, do ye sniff the whisky, Sandie? Ay, ay, fetch a couple of tumblers, Bella, before we get to wark. We'll no part wi' a dry thrapple, ony way."

Felton simply looked on in speechless wonderment. He had long since doubted old Crozier's sanity, so that he could only construe this display as a fresh and more decided manifestation of madness. Whisky was poured out liberally for the hind, but to Felton none was offered.

"Ye're no flitting, ye ken," said the old man to him, by way of explaining the omission. "*Mr.* Felton is gaun to be my faithful steward, do ye see?" proceeded he, turning to the servants sitting in a row against the wall. "But the rest o' ye maun gan. He'll no just hae need o' ye. You said ye'd be wanting a new place, Sandie, and ye'se get it. Ay, ay, I'll pay you up to Martinmas, dinna fear. You never kent a Crozier swindle ony man out o' sixpence, least of a' them that hae served him out or in. How much do ye want for yoursel' and Bess?"

The man's eyes were fixed upon the ceiling, upon the concentric circles caused by the light from the lamp below, whilst he made his calculation.

"Thirty pound, or there-away, for the half year,"

said he at last ; “ but we’ll say twenty-five, for ye hae aye been a good maister to the like o’ huz.”

The farmer drew out a pocket-book and counted seven five-pound notes, which he thrust across to the countryman.

“ There’s thirty-five for ye—not another wawd. Ay, ay, ye may stay outby until ye hae fand another place, o’ course. Now, Bella—no! Yae month, do you say? Ha’d away, hinny! Ye’ll just put that in your pocket.” And the man threw a five-pound note into her lap, which was about three times the wages due, as she was paid monthly.

“ And when are we to gan ? ” asked Isabel.

“ The morn’s morning.”

“ Are ye gaun to close the hoose? Will ye no want—”

“ That’s nae business o’ yours. Did I no tell ye that Mr. Felton is gaun to be my faithful steward? Ye’ll just a’ gan—”

“ Had I no better get the tormits sawn—”

“ Do ye no hear what I hae said ? ” bawled the incensed master. “ Gan oot! Gan and get your gear

together! Do ye think I dinna ken how to manage my ain affairs at the age of sixty-five? Ha'd away, noo!"

Felton, moving to depart with the others, was thrust back to his chair, and old Crozier sat down to his documents at the table.

Immediately after supper the farmer locked up his victim in the bedroom allotted to him as usual, and the gaoler returned to the parlour. Midnight struck by the old house clock, and still Crozier had not retired. The old man seemed to count the strokes, and after the twelfth he poured out some fresh whisky. His face looked haggard and drawn now that he was alone, but the same fiery sparks shot from his eyes. He took a draught of the neat spirit, then silently opened the parlour door. A movement of the finger kept the dog silent, and throughout the house there was no other sound. He went into the kitchen, and by the light of the dying fire he fumbled for some matches, with which he lit a candle. With it in his hand, he stared around. Dazed abstraction seemed to possess those rugged features, the expres-

sion of which was usually practical enough. Presently his eyes travelled from one familiar object to another, but without sign of recognition.

“We’re a’ deen—just a’ deen entirely a’thegither!”

As he muttered the words he placed the candlestick on the table and went to the back door, which he noiselessly unlocked and opened. As he stepped into the silent yard, strongly redolent of byre and stable, Crozier raised his eyes to the sky, lit with a host of brilliant stars, and he saw where they ended at the black crests of the fir trees hard by. Closing the door after him, he went forth.

For upwards of an hour did the old farmer prowls around the premises, like some disconsolate spirit of his ancestors. Many generations had been born and had died in this old homestead, and every object about the place had some personal suggestion for their latest representative. When he came round to the front, the sound of the river in its stony channel muttered familiar messages. At last a restless plover called from the haugh below, and suddenly the farmer turned and made his way to the back door.

The candle had burned out, and the fire was dark. As noiselessly as before, he closed and fastened the door, and went into the light of the parlour. He threw himself into the arm-chair, and in that position he dozed until morning.

A sufficiency of food having been left with him, Felton spent the following day locked up in his bedroom. He did not know that the master was absent from Bygate the whole time. The man spent the time in characteristic reflection, and part of it in inditing an equally characteristic letter to Daniel Curle, with whom, through the hind's assistance, he had managed to sustain a pretty regular correspondence.

"There is a new and somewhat mysterious development here," said he, in the course of this epistle, "and one which I cannot pretend to think signifies exactly what appears. In spite of all your arguments to the contrary, I am quite certain that this man is mad, and to be quite frank, I don't think one's life is altogether safe in his hands. The marriage of Sibbald with my daughter, which I men-

tioned in my last, has had an extraordinary effect on him, and has been, I think, the direct cause of his new departure, as this latter has followed immediately upon an interview with his son. He has absolutely disowned Sibbald, and has, in connection with the step, resolved upon some new course which I cannot yet quite get to the bottom of. He speaks of giving up Bygate altogether, but I don't think for a moment that he will be capable of this. Last night certainly he paid off and dismissed all his servants, and talked of *my* being his steward, but from the tone in which it was announced, I suspect some demoniac sarcasm underneath. . . .

"The mere ill-usage which I have undergone has only confirmed my philosophy. How you can continue to hold battle upon the pavement I cannot understand. Come to the honest earth, my man! With your fervour and eloquence you ought to be able to lead a crusade against—I mean head an exodus of Quaysiders. What a strike that would be! In all this organising and martialling of your industrial forces what possible headway do you make?

Life does not become one whit the simpler—nay, do you not add yet other wheels to the intolerable complications? If the main-spring is rotten, what earthly good in enlarging the works? Smash it all up and go back to the most primitive chronometer. It will, it must, smash itself up for you at last, and great will be the fall thereof. The opportunity of rescuing your race is yours. Strike, Daniel, strike whilst the day is yours! . . .

“Your theories of the tenure of property I cannot yet quite accept. It is quite true that primarily everything is everybody’s, but would not the confiscation you advocate lead to considerable disorder? If from no other consideration, we have (in the practical application you suggest to me) to remember that the actual holders of the property are at present the stronger, and any attempt to interfere with the established arrangement would most likely be attended with ugly consequences, which, in my case, would be more than ordinarily unacceptable. You must recollect that my position is exceptional. I am dead to the world; I live only to cultivate a new

life for myself. Let me copy out a sonnet from Wordsworth's poems which I have lately come upon, and which hits exactly what I feel since my new-birth. Wordsworth seems to have written very much for my own especial behoof, but these lines especially. They are on page 137, and are entitled 'Retirement.'

“If the whole weight of what we think and feel,
Save only far as thought and feeling blend
With action, were as nothing, patriot friend !
From thy remonstrance would be no appeal ;
But to promote and fortify the weal
Of our own being is her paramount end ;
A truth which they alone shall comprehend
Who shun the mischief which they cannot heal.
Peace in these feverish times is sovereign bliss :
Here, with no thirst but what the stream can slake,
And startled only by the rustling brake,
Cool air I breathe ; while the unincumbered mind
By some weak aims at services assigned
To gentle natures, thanks not Heaven amiss.’

“ If I had had the gift of poesy, that is exactly what I should have written. Every sentiment which it contains has been often in my mind, and indeed,

in prose of course, I have often given utterance to them before having met with this admirable poem."

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It was deepening twilight before Felton was released by old Crozier in person. The latter had his prisoner down into the kitchen, and seeing all quiet there, and utensils apparently unused, the fiddler ventured to look into his companion's face. He noted the glare of triumph there.

"Ay, ye're alane here, my man. Ye're my faithful steward now onyway. I want my supper, and dinna be lang about it. I'll just hae twa-three slashes off yon ham-shank, fried juist to a nicety, ye ken. Coffee? Ay, I'll hae coffee, daur say. Whisky 'ull come in better at the hinder end. Dinna be lang." And Felton was left to his devices.

Practice had made the man deft in various household duties, and he set about the supper in a business-like way. He had the fire to light, and the bellows to blow, to economise time, but he very soon had all in working order. As the sound and aroma of the

cooking viands came over to Crozier where he sat writing a letter at the table in the parlour, he looked up, and the grim frown which had brooded on his features was displaced by that recent light of defiant exultation. It was far from a pleasant light, nor indeed did it seem altogether a natural one for those features. It seemed to chronicle some victory over, or some revolt against, inward feelings of his own, as much as the blockheadism of other people.

None the less, the farmer showed an unimpaired appetite for his meal when Felton summoned him to it, and he twitted his steward with his culinary prowess as he partook of the savoury dish presented. After a little contest with himself he bade his companion take a seat with him, and under their joint exertions the table was soon cleared. Afterwards, Felton had to undertake the menial duties, and he was bidden join his master in the parlour as soon as he had done. When he came he found Crozier still writing, or in the attitude of writing, for the start and stupefied stare which the old man gave upon the other's entrance seemed to suggest that he had been

nodding over the paper. When Felton came, the farmer thrust pen and paper away from him.

"That'll dea—that'll dea," muttered he. "Ay, ay, every stick. . . . Man, gan for the fiddle!"

Felton was astonished at the command, but went readily. His expectations from the fiddle had not been fully realised, but the thought now occurred to him that possibly at the eleventh hour the thairm might redeem its character as a sovereign exorcist. In the thrill of hope that the thought had given him, he returned strumming on the strings in quite an airy manner. Crozier scowled at this, but let the cloud pass quickly.

The whisky was produced, and from the way in which the farmer planted himself in the arm-chair he seemed to be giving himself to a night's hilarity, such as he had spent with this same companion in the herd's cottage of Whinburnhope, and never since. All seemed promising to Felton, and he took care to choose such strains as he knew would appeal favourably to his strange host. The thought of Saul and David inevitably occurred to him, and this David re-

solved to use his power well. The old man's features brightened as the music danced through the desolate house, but it was some time before he fully abandoned himself to unrestrained joviality. Felton exercised the greatest caution in displaying any direct participation in the mirth, mindful of several occasions upon which the most innocent remark had dashed a whole world of merriment to the ground. But by degrees he observed that his companion permitted it on this occasion with unaccustomed liberality.

"My aa'd forebears would hae had your skull to drink frae on sicna occasion as this," interposed Crozier once, after roaring out a chorus, and accompanied his remark with a glance at the member referred to, which alarmed Felton in his solitary position there. It took him some time to banish the grim vision of the moorland desolation around which had vividly accompanied the suggestion, and with which all sorts of traditionary horrors associated with this very family were interwoven. The conviction of the old farmer's madness constantly haunted him,

and was always ready to add an ugly shade to any unpleasant experience. The depth of Crozier's draughts too soon began to add yet a fresh source of uneasiness.

But for some hours the old man's vein continued innocently hilarious. Not until the old clock struck twelve was Felton to know any renewal of his fears. At the first stroke, a furious blow upon the table, which shook all the glass upon it, and made the lamp rock, caused the musician to drop his bow. In the dead silence which so abruptly followed, Crozier, with his finger raised, counted the remaining strokes of the clock, and when all were done he demanded in a thick voice if his companion believed in ghaists. Felton could only give a timorous negative, for, contrary to proverbial experience, liberal alcohol quelled this man's spirit.

"You dinna ! Then, by gum, you shall see 'em."

Therewith the farmer rose from his chair in a very unsteady manner, and seizing his companion by the arm, hauled him from the room, and up the dark staircase to the rooms above. Their stumbling foot-

steps re-echoed through the house, and in genuine terror though he was, Felton dared not resist, lest worse yet should befall him. From room to room they went, knocking against each other, and against everything they could possibly encounter, but to the fiddler's more sober vision no ghost appeared. On the landing he even ventured to observe as much, hoping the farmer would be appeased, but the remark was peculiarly unfortunate.

"Can ye no see 'em, ye blind, doited idiot?" roared the other. "There! Gad, he'll hae ye by the lugs! That's aa'd Martin, I'se warr'nd ye—I kent his—his—I whiles see'd him when I was a laddie. Gosh, they're a' about us, hinny. . . . Hisht! . . . Ay, ay, this is the deevil—catch a ha'd of him—!"

Suddenly the old man's incoherent exclamations were interrupted, for Felton, terrified beyond endurance, had torn himself from the clutch of his intoxicated persecutor, and was making for the stairs. Whether from fright, unsteadiness, or the difficulties of the dark, the impetuous Felton missed his footing, and the mingled cries, groans and bumps

which accompanied his projection down the staircase made no bad representation of the supernatural antics which had appeared to Crozier's heated vision.

"Keep a ha'd, Martin, my fellow!" shouted the farmer from the dark landing, where he was clutching the banister. "Ha'd him doon! He's a slippery deevil as ony out o' hell. Come by here! Davie! . . . Garrh! ye'll miss him. . . . Ha'd him by the breeks! Thrapple him! . . . Come in ahint!"

Genuine shrieks were now added to the confusion of the darkness and the sound of a dog or a fiend worrying some creature in its clutches.

"Call him off or I'll throttle him! Ya—ah! . . . Call him, you drunken old villain!"

For some seconds there was silence up above whilst this contest proceeded below, then, as if sobered, Crozier began to descend, and shouted at the same time in his ordinary voice,

"Davie, come by here! Leave ha'd of him! My sartie, if ye harm the dog. Davie! Davie! Come away, man!"

By the time the farmer reached the bottom, the

dog had obeyed the familiar injunction, and Felton too had released the animal from the clutch which he had effected, and had sought refuge in the parlour. Crozier came in to him, and was dazed by the lamplight.

"Where are ye, ye muckle brock?" cried he, staring around stupidly. "Come away, here! get oot wi' you!" he added, turning furiously to the growling dog and directing a violent kick at him.

Felton came creeping out, his face all smeared with blood, which he was wiping off, and a look of abject terror visible through it. The fit of desperate defiance had left him, and he seemed to have given himself up for lost.

"Ye ken better whether Croziers hae ony ghaists or no," remarked his antagonist, going over towards him. "It was aa'd Martin, I ken him nicely. . . . Whar did he ha'd ye?"

Felton muttered something about the dog.

"The dog, ye donnart idiot! . . . It was aa'd Martin I tell ye. He aye comes when there's ony mischief agait. . . . I see'd him graiping at the lugs o' ye. . . . Garrh! He's ahint you!"

At this startling announcement, accompanied as it was by an alarming expression of the old man's features, Felton darted away.

"Will ye come at yane o' your ain breed?" vociferated Crozier, also starting back and snatching up the fiddle from the table which he brandished as a weapon of defence. "Come away, then! . . . Wad ye hae me gie the aa'd hoose and the gear to the like o' yon? . . . B-ut I winna, I tell you. Ay, ay, come away!" He smote valiantly at the visionary assailants as he roared his defiance. "I'll no dea it,—not if ye—Ha'd aff!" With a furious onslaught the old man put his ancestors to flight, and with stumbling impetuosity pursued them round the room. "If ye'll no be freends then—Ay, that's aa'd Martin!" Out of the door he went, and suddenly stopped before the old clock. The light from the room fell upon Crozier as he stared at the dial, and Felton from his shelter watched him.

"Do you think that'll hide ye?" exclaimed the farmer at last, and breaking open the stomach of the tall clock-case he belaboured the supposed anta-

gonist within until the fiddle fell in fragments from his clutches. Then in dogged silence the man returned to the parlour and sank in the arm-chair.

It was broad daylight when Felton awoke the following morning on the kitchen floor to hear a knocking loud and persistent. He leapt up, and went to the back door, from which the sound came. Two men were standing there, and they stared into Felton's blood-stained face in astonishment.

"What do you want here?" said he, supposing them to be tramps.

"Shall we bring the van into the yard?"

Felton looked round, and saw old Crozier behind him.

"We've come along for the furniture," said one of those outside.

"Ay, ay," returned the old man, and he went out to direct the operations, whilst Felton stared in bewilderment around.

CHAPTER VII.

PASTURES NEW.

SIBBALD had formed his resolution with characteristic promptitude. Any contest with his father had never for a moment occurred to him. Since the other course was not to be, and now that it had been thrust upon him by sheer force of circumstance, the enterprise of a wider life offered positive allurements. Nearly a thousand pounds of his own he had, which his mother had left him, so that immediate starvation did not enter into the case.

Recent events had considerably modified that outlook upon life with which he had accompanied Daniel Curle to the Quayside meeting. The sudden expansion of his emotional nature to the first touch of Adelina had developed what may be called a whole character inflorescence hitherto concealed, and

the latent energy which had been devoted to bucolic works and imaginative speculation peered forward into other fields. So with a light and vigorous step, upon leaving his father, Sibbald recrossed the sunny bent to Crawston.

Surprised to see him back so soon, Lina looked inquiringly at him as he entered the cottage, and at the benignant light which he shed upon her she immediately hugged him.

“What makes you so glad, my darling boy?”

“Do I look it? Well, lassie, I’m not altogether sorry either. You’ll have your own way, Lina, for I’m off to Newcastle.”

“But how—when? Not to live—altogether?”

“To live altogether. My father has dismissed me, and I’ll take no other employment in this countryside.”

Unable to restrain her mad, childish glee, Lina laughed and cried, hugged and kissed, until Sibbald was constrained, in sheer self-defence, to bid her moderate her excitement.

“In fact it won’t be altogether so delightful,” he

added, in what seemed to his heated wife a chilling tone ; “ for, of course, we shall only live in lodgings, you know.”

“ Oh, yes—but never mind, we can get nice lodgings up Jesmond way just to begin. Oh, you dear, kind boy ! Now, don’t be cross. Really, to see a street once more ! ”

Adelina’s excitement by no means abated when she was told to prepare at once, whilst her husband went for the Brig End gig.

“ But how can I pack—? ”

“ Only your bag. We can come back for the rest when we have found a place ? ”

Once away, Sibbald enjoyed the drive over the hills as much as his companion. As he looked over the widening prospect through the clear, sparkling air, and saw the cloud shadows skipping onwards, and the bent and heath rippled by the breeze, he felt his mental horizon expand with it, and his pugnacity increase. And so it continued throughout their journey to the town.

Despite the numberless distractions which assailed

his wife when her feet were once planted upon the familiar stones, Sibbald kept her resolutely to the matter in hand. So they went by the tram to the part she had selected, and spent the afternoon in finding such accommodation as satisfied the requirements of both. When this was eventually done (in a new terrace facing the town prospect on the south), Lina got her husband to relax, and he willingly accompanied her to renew her familiarity with the scenes from which she had for so long been so rudely divorced.

Incessant was the flow of comment which Adelina kept up as they drew slowly on from one shop window to another of the main streets. Fortunately she did not demand audible or coherent response from her companion in their enterprise. She was content with the affectionate smile, with the muttered negative or affirmative as she required, to which Sibbald proved equal. Indeed, he bore her tattle magnanimously, for it was not at all the kind of conversation he needed on the occasion. But in view of the gladness on her face, it did not actively

oppress him. He pursued his own thoughts, which this actual contact with the horizon towards which he had been bending perhaps sobered a little. When the lamps were being lighted, they went into a place to have tea, and afterwards continued their perambulation until the shops were being closed. At this point Lina begged that they should end up with the theatre, but to this Sibbald positively demurred.

Agreeably, to Adelina's urgent entreaty, she was spared another visit to the country. Sibbald himself, three days later, fetched from Crawston what was wanted, and left some things in the care of Mrs. Dixon at the Brig End. As he went from the inn on this occasion he came face to face with Jenniper, the sudden apparition causing him a moment's unaccountable disquiet. He had never thought of her, until now it suddenly flashed over him that the kind services she had rendered him had deserved at least some communication of his recent movements. The unaltered calm of the girl's appearance and greeting perhaps only intensified the effect.

"I meant to write to you," he said with a hesitation which was strange in him.

"What about?" asked she in real or apparent surprise, and Sibbald managed to laugh.

"I thought you might care to know what had become of us."

"No doubt I should have heard."

As Sibbald looked at her, struck by the singular tone, her colour changed, and, calling out a sharp "good-bye," she turned to go. Sibbald at once dismounted.

"Jenniper!" She looked round and obeyed the summons he sent to her. Silently leading the way from the village, the girl followed to where the green brae, covered with blooming gorse, sheltered the open road.

"That tone will not do for us again, Jenniper," Sibbald began. "After such intercourse as we have had we can never go back to the ways of strangers. It is true that all the goodness has been on one side, and it is only too true that upon the other has been what must appear gross indifference to it, but it is in appearance only. I would rather have done anything than hurt you in this way."

"Hurt me?" laughed Jenniper. "I dinna just understand you."

"Perhaps not, but I understand you, and perhaps, just a little, myself too now. Do you think I am willing to make use of you for my own convenience, and when I have got my ends forget all about you? That is not my notion even of common gratitude, to say nothing of any better and higher feeling."

Jenniper seemed almost disconcerted by this extraordinary change of manner in him. The old abrupt, so to speak, impersonal mode of speech had always suited her, her own sentimental faculties being scarcely available as yet in intercourse, and serving her far better under the cloak of irony.

"I never thought that you'd forget me," said she bluntly, "but I dinna want you to report to me every step you take. Are you going to live in Newcastle a'together?"

"For the present. My views of life have altered, and I want to extend my experience of things."

"Have you seen my brother yonder?"

"Not this time. I am afraid he would hardly care for my society."

"But I'd like you well to see him."

"You would? Then, of course, I shall do so. Give me his address."

Jenniper did so, and Sibbald scribbled it on the back of an envelope. "For any special reason?" said he, without raising his eyes from the paper.

"I canna make out his ways of life, but I dinna think they're good ones," Jenniper ventured to say. Then Sibbald looked at her, and allowed his eyes to remain for some seconds upon her face.

"If not positively good, I don't think they are positively bad, my lass. There is nothing positive in our time. Do you think it possible that my ways of life would improve him?" added he with a smile.

"Not if that is one of your notions," she replied with spirit. "But you dinna think it. You ken nicely that what *is* positive never alters. One doesna need to be through to Newcastle to learn that."

"Perhaps not," assented the other, intending no argument, and apparently making a mental note of

her attitude. But the want of readiness in Sibbald's words was quite as obvious as his desire to be exceptionally cordial. He seemed to be thinking of what he had next to say.

"Well, then, good-bye," said Jenniper, inevitably observing this.

"Oh, must you go? . . . Yes, well, good-bye. . . . But, in return, will you keep an eye on Bygate for me? And if any—"

"It's no likely to fly away," said the girl. "Do you want me to keep an eye on the ghosts?"

"They can take care of themselves, but if you hear of my father getting—"

"But surely you ken that your father is no there."

Jenniper's tone puzzled him, and he looked at her inquiringly.

"Do you mean to say that you have no heard of his leaving yesterday with a' his furniture?"

"Leaving Bygate with his furniture?"

"Certainly; and Sandie Purves told my father that they were a' paid off. The house is shut up."

The girl looked in astonishment at the effect of her

announcement upon Sibbald. Evidently it was all new to him.

"But where did he go?" was the mechanical inquiry.

"I canna say. They think to Newcastle. . . . Ay, Felton with him."

The youth mounted his horse, and waving a farewell, walked the animal onwards. After he had gone thus some distance, he turned round and saw Jenniper still standing there to watch him, but when he looked she disappeared into the gorse. He paused a moment as though about to return, but ultimately trotted away.

That short distance had been sufficient to remove the shock which Jenniper's news had caused him, and to re-establish the girl's mere personality as the chief subject of his thought. He could not understand the impression she had made upon him. A sense of commiseration came over him at the sight of her standing there alone, as though he were somehow involved in the duty of comforting her. Scene after scene occurred to him in which she and Adelina were

contrasted, and he could not resist the conviction that Jenniper was a woman after all—in her different way. It was strange ; but with each increasing mile Adelina beckoned him onwards.

Jenniper was a long time in the gorse. When she had withdrawn into hiding she none the less continued to watch the horseman's progress, without being herself observed. As it became necessary she climbed higher up the slope, and by this means she could command the road for a great distance and that solitary moving speck upon it.

There was less mystery in her train of thought. Spurn and resist it as she might, it was now long since Jenniper had known herself deeply affected by young Crozier's approach. She had used every argument to overcome what she insisted upon regarding as a ridiculous weakness, but, naturally frank as she was, she had to confess that it prevailed against her. She had long since fully gauged the worthlessness of a man who could be subdued by the charms of Adelina, and had in resentment hurled him from her mind ; still the blank desolation of this

sunny landscape became more and more apparent as he, the despised, drew farther from it. Now that he was beyond the most distant ridge, she still gazed there, and it was long before she flitted away over the hills, avoiding the village below, and leaving undone the errand which had brought her there.

A novel sense of depression accompanied Sibbald on his return journey to the town, and as he walked all the way from the station to his lodgings, the attributes of this great industrial centre added to the weight. They had of late exhilarated him by the width of their suggestion, but pugnacity was low in him to-day. He longed for the refuge of his four walls, and for the spiritual repose which he now associated with the company of Adelina. It was, therefore, with a sense of infinite relief that he mounted the steps to his door and let himself in. Entering the sitting-room hastily to receive the embrace of his wife, he found it empty. The disappointment was so keen that he stood still in the middle of the floor and stared vacantly before him. Whilst there, the landlady came in, and he moved round.

"You'll want your tea, Mr. Crozier?"

"Yes, please. Is my wife out, do you know?"

"A lady called for her this morning, and she has not been in since. She said she should be back by tea-time."

Sibbald sat down and read the newspaper he had brought in. At least, he held it up before him, but his eyes remained fixed upon a single place. It was already long past their usual hour for tea, and Lina knew the train by which he would return. His meal was laid, and he partook of it. Then he took the arm-chair again, and did not even pretend to read.

About eight o'clock the door-bell rang, and involuntarily Sibbald rose from his chair. He at once recognised the voice in the hall.

"Oh, is he back?" And a minute later Adelina was hugging him with an excessive display of affection.

"I am so grieved, dear boy," cried she. "How horrid of me to be sure! I wouldn't have had it happen for anything. But you'll forgive me, won't you? I've had such a lovely day. So strange she

should have come this morning. . . . Let me get my things off, and I'll tell you all about it." Therewith Lina snatched herself away and fled upstairs.

When she had gone and Crozier stood alone on the hearth-rug, it occurred to him that but for her voice he should hardly have known her. A moment's reflection fixed the change upon the wholly unknown outfit in which Adelina had appeared. Sibbald pondered, then felt a wave of resentment override the pang of disappointment which had afflicted him before. When, however, in a minute or two his wife entered in a gown familiar to him, and all radiant with glee, he crushed his ill-humour and listened with a smile to the narrative she gave him.

"I never told you that yesterday I sent a note to Leila Featherstone, an old school friend of mine, just to let her know that I was here. When I was sitting this morning wondering what I should do, who should come but Leila herself to answer my letter in person. Wasn't it good of her? She is just her old self, and is engaged to be married to Mr. Wilkinson in the County bank. They'll be such nice friends to

have, and we sha'n't have many," added Lina ruefully, "for I won't call upon one of father's, they were all so horrid. I should never have thought it of Emily Parke, at any rate ; but never mind, she was always rather stuck up, and Leila is worth all the others put together. *You* will like her, Sib, I'm sure. She is a great reader. We have been to change her books at the library to-day—really, well, she took me home, and Mrs. Featherstone was very nice too."

"So you have spent the day with them?"

"Since dinner I have been about the town with Leila; she had a lot of shopping to do. And that's what made me late for you, dear boy. I am so awfully sorry. Will you forgive me?"

Sibbald took the caress graciously, although all the time he was contemplating the extraordinary change in Adelina. With the last traces of suffering and discontent which the day's adventures had swept from her, certain pathetic attributes which had appealed strongly to Sibbald had also vanished, and to his critical eye Adelina appeared another person. This buoyant aggressiveness could but ill replace the de-

parted qualities in his eyes, and that sense of uneasiness which had possessed him since his return retained its hold, although Lina's vivacity disarmed him for any display of his feeling.

"I'm talking all about myself," said Adelina abruptly, after much more of her natural prattle; "but what have you done, darling? Have you had a nice day? What did poor old Crawston look like?"

Sibbald gave a brief and sober account of his journey, keeping to the purely matter-of-fact details, and reserving even the main item of interest—that startling glimpse of the doings at Bygate.

"But I saw Jenniper," he added, "just as I was coming away."

"Oh, poor old Jenniper!" cried Lina with a ringing laugh. "She wasn't half a bad girl after all, was she? She meant well, I am sure. Don't you think so?" This topic also he did not pursue.

On the whole Sibbald found his four walls and the anticipated repose in the company of Adelina less satisfying than he had expected, and he was

not sorry when the hour allowed them to withdraw. As he was undressing, the thought of that fashionable disguise in which Lina had appeared to him came back and refused to be disposed of; but as none of the garments were to be seen in the bedroom, and as Adelina herself volunteered no remark concerning them, Sibbald was too proud to open the conversation. But it was long before he fell asleep.

For a day or two that followed, Lina was more reserved, and did not display the slightest inclination to repeat the escapade which her instinct told her had only received the modified approval of her husband. As he too was thoughtful and uncommunicative, her tactics were the more appropriate. She accordingly passed the greater part of the day on the sofa, consuming a novel which her recovered friend, Miss Featherstone, had lent to her. There was nothing to reveal the tendency of Sibbald's thoughts until he came in one day about tea-time and announced that he was going to take Lina that night to a place of entertainment,

A proposal of the kind from him caused his wife so much astonishment that she instantly leapt out of her restraint, and chattered away in her old familiar manner. It now appeared that Leila had spoken with praise of this very thing; that Adelina had been longing to go and see it, but had not ventured to suggest it to her dear old boy; that, in short, he was the best, kindest boy of a husband that girl had ever had.

Sibbald's own preparations were of the simplest, and he sat with a book waiting for his wife to come down. In due course she appeared, and presented to his eyes, which were raised as she came in, that same unknown figure that had greeted him two or three days ago. He stared, and she tried to pass it off with a laugh.

"Don't you like them, dear?"

"I didn't know you were in want of anything new," replied he in a tone between indifference and chagrin.

"I got them so cheap, Sib. They were selling off. And really when I got by the side of Leila

I—I felt—you know—I thought you would like me to look nice.”

“Well, come along.”

“You’re not angry, are you?” asked Lina in rather an aggrieved way. “Of course I sha’n’t do it again. I shall not want anything now for a long time. It seemed such a good opportunity.”

“Angry? Oh, no. . . . Come along, or we shall be late.”

Sibbald took his amusement soberly. The entertainment which had engaged his attention was one given by what was called a Vaudeville Company,—performing cats, mechanical mannikins, great wire and facial performances, etc.—and it did not take the Scholar long to discern that he was hardly in his element. But as his companion’s enjoyment was obvious he restrained his impatience, and when he could not laugh he tried to indulge his own thoughts in silence.

Occasionally in doing so he found himself carried very far from the scenes immediately before him. One absurd thought which had repeatedly occurred

to him was how Jenniper would appear in such a company, and what *her* ideas of it would be. Upon each return this speculation gathered strength and extended its suggestions, and ultimately he got so absorbed in it that a movement of his wife's failed to arouse his attention.

"Look, Sib, look—over there!"

When at length Crozier was conscious that her remark had no reference to the performance they were witnessing, he started out of his reverie.

"Look, surely—isn't that your father? . . . It can't be; but how exactly like."

"Where?" demanded Sibbald, and followed her eyes.

In him there was not an instant's doubt. A few rows from him sat the unmistakable figure of the old master of Bygate—a grey, rugged, and noticeable figure, but dressed, as Sibbald immediately observed, with striking propriety, and in no garments that he could associate with the paternal wardrobe. At that moment the old man was laughing unrestrainedly, the sound of which reached

Sibbald's ears distinctly, and had other than an exhilarating effect upon him.

"Isn't it?" whispered Adelina. When she repeated her inquiry, the youth gave a fierce affirmative, and would say no more.

Whatever Sibbald's attitude to the diversion before, now it simply did not exist for him. The whole assembly, nay, the whole world, was focussed for him in that hilarious countryman, who, by reason of his infectious merriment, was an object also for other eyes. The merriment, though infectious to others, was to Sibbald more than a mockery. He discerned in it genuine tragedy, and if it had not exercised an irresistible, however painful, fascination over him he would have fled immediately from the place.

This he felt unable to do. He was doomed to sit there in the midst of the merry company, an unwilling spectator, not of the general mirth merely, but of that far more significant, particular display which could pierce him as no mirth (or tears) had ever hitherto been able to do. Brimming over as

she was with enjoyment, Lina found it a hard task to adapt herself to her companion's condition, and yet she was unable altogether to disregard it. She could not possibly make out why, since the old man's attitude was so marked, the son too should not give himself up to the evening's amusement. It was not that Lina made any attempt to adjust herself positively to Sibbald's mood. Her difficulty lay in the mere negative, in the power to keep down the ebullition of spirits which she herself felt. She wanted to pour out to him that endless flow of airy comment which the occasion required, and which only the most heroic efforts could repress. She was capable of only a very partial success, but her shortcomings scarcely affected Sibbald. He simply did not hear her.

It was early when the assembly broke up,—not past ten o'clock.

"You mustn't let him see you," said Sibbald, as he drew Lina into a stream of people making for the door, and notwithstanding the instructions, the youth himself took his own precautions for screening her as

well as himself from the old man's eyes. The difficulty was increased by his determination to keep a watch upon his father as well as hold himself concealed. By good fortune their position enabled Sibbald and Adelina to get out of the building first, and once upon the pavement, the Scholar felt his task considerably lightened. He watched every face that issued into the lamplight with a grim intensity of purpose that arrested many a passing glance. Of his wife's company he seemed wholly oblivious, and when she mentioned something about going home he turned to look at her in astonishment.

"Yes," he said, "you—" But just at the moment the expected figure came on to the pavement. "Take the tram," exclaimed Sibbald abruptly; "I—may be late." To Lina's amazement, he had gone, and she could not discover in what direction.

After the first sensation of surprise, Adelina did not fret over her predicament. It is true she had never been accustomed to prowl about alone at a late hour of the night, but she knew no feeling of alarm at being obliged now to do so. Had she

been pitched upon the hills in the neighbourhood of Bygate at that hour, with only belated plovers and curlews to serenade her, the case would have been different. It was a sense of solitude from which Lina shrank, and the thought of solitude upon a familiar pavement did not occur to her. The dispersing throng by which she was surrounded distinctly animated her. She had been rather disappointed at not having discovered any eligible former friend amongst those around her in the audience, or even one over whom she could domineer with defiant glances, but so it had been. She had to console herself with an imagined victory over an enemy that had not condescended to appear.

There was nothing particularly inviting to the young wife in her solitary lodgings in face of Sibbald's singular announcement that he should be late. She of course connected it with the apparition of that "horrid old creature" from Bygate, for her husband had never been out one night since their arrival in Newcastle. She did not exactly contemplate a nocturnal ramble, but each moment she

found increasing relish of the feeling of liberty which her situation afforded. There was plenty of time before the trams ceased, so with a free mind Adelina abandoned herself to a little longer enjoyment of the highways. From merely watching the stream of people issuing from the building, Lina at length launched forth upon it, and sailed on down the street without any particular object beyond sustaining the sense of pleasure in the immediate present.

As they spread onwards and took their various courses, the throng which had especially exhilarated Lina soon thinned down, and became transformed into the scattered promenaders, whose short respite from bondage is inevitably allotted to the lamplit pavement. In this there was not much fun, so Adelina turned at a certain lamp-post, and in doing so was confronted at a distance of two or three yards by a well-clad male figure with hat upraised.

"Miss Adelina Brett, surely," exclaimed he with confidence,—for, unknown to Lina, each lamp had confirmed the fact for him since a dawning suspicion in the crowd.

"Why, Charl—Mr. Robson!" cried she, after a shock of fright. "How ever did you come here?"

"I rather think that ought to be my question," said he with a jocular smile. "I'm on my native heath, but they told me that you—"

"But I've come back. I was just waiting for a tram to Jesmond."

"So am I. One's just gone. May I—"

So together they walked up again towards the monument in rapidly increasing talk.

CHAPTER VIII.

“FOR TO-MORROW WE—”

IT was a fine night, with a fresh breeze sweeping through the more or less deserted streets. Once away from the crowd, Sibbald had no difficulty in keeping his eye upon the figure in which he was interested. The old gentleman took his course leisurely along the pavement, casting free glances about him, at the dark buildings and the passers-by, and betraying nothing but a sense of self-complacency at what might have seemed to be a singular situation for him. This absence of all incongruity with his surroundings had struck Sibbald from the first glance of his father. As he appeared there, the dignified yeoman would have passed easily for a retired military man of rough and choleric temperament, developed under the exigencies of hard active service. The family dignity of a long line of Croziers lay upon this self-constituted

last of his race, and this extinguished all that was purely Bœotian in his character.

The clank of the ferule to his heavy walking-stick rang as he dragged it after him along the stones, the sound reaching the ears of Sibbald, where he followed at a safe distance. The youth had at first thought of confronting his father there and then, in the hope of gaining, at least, some sort of explanation of his extraordinary movements, but the impulse passed, or was rather removed by a positive sense of discomfort in approaching so unfamiliar a figure for such a purpose. Formerly Sibbald had not failed to perceive the shade of influence he seemed to hold over his rugged old sire, and it had given him some assurance in his intercourse with the elder. Something to-night apprised the Scholar that *he* now held the subordinate position, and that in the prospective interview something like subordination would inevitably be expected, or demanded, of him. This was not agreeable to him either, so it was he continued to skulk after the unsuspecting steps which strode triumphant over all before him.

At the dark corner by the church old Crozier turned, and Sibbald hastened to keep in sight of him. He was not a minute too soon, for some twenty paces down the street he saw his father turn into a doorway beneath a large globular lamp. When the pursuer came up to it, there was nothing to indicate to him the nature of the house. It had a quasi-public appearance, but no sign or name was on the door or lamp. Two steps gave entrance to a little vestibule within which was a second door, panelled with frosted glass, in the centre of which was some hieroglyphic or monogram which Sibbald could make nothing of. Without any definite reason, the young man gave in to an impression that his father did not live there, so he crossed over to the opposite pavement and paced to and fro. Presently a policeman came along, and Sibbald stopped him.

"Will you tell me if that is an hotel?" said he, pointing to the doorway across the street.

"No, sir. It's the Tynedale Club."

The man was going to pass on, but Sibbald detained him.

"Is it a—a respectable place?"

The policeman smiled.

"It's called so; a mixed affair, though. I don't believe in yon clubs. . . . But it's a respectable house," he added, as though suddenly reminded of the dangers of a defamatory opinion. "You see I belong to the Y.M.C.A.," he added, to complete the apology.

"Oh, thank you," and Sibbald went on.

But he lingered in the vicinity of the street for some time, hearing various church clocks, as well as the Cathedral, chime the quarters, and ultimately strike eleven. At the sound of this Crozier walked directly to the doorway at which his father had entered, and went in. Inside, a waiter chanced to be passing towards the staircase, and the intruder arrested him.

"Does Mr. Crozier belong to this club?"

"An old gentleman? . . . Yes, a new member. He is having supper now. Do you want to see him?"

"I won't trouble him now. He's here most nights?"

"Yes. He leaves at twelve exactly."

And the man hurried on his affairs, whilst Sibbald went out again.

Information he had certainly got, but no enlightenment. His father's convivial propensities were, of course, no secrets to Sibbald, but that the old man had come to establish himself in such novel haunts of conviviality at his time of life seemed scarcely credible to the ethically minded son. That his own action had radically affected his parent he knew, but his difficulty lay in discovering any possible connection between parental resentment and this new course of life. Ineffectually revolving this knotty problem, the Scholar spent yet another hour in the immediate neighbourhood of the Tynedale Club.

As the clocks began to strike midnight Sibbald took up a position exactly opposite the club doorway, and a minute or two later he saw three figures issue from it, the central one of which he immediately recognised as the object of his solicitude. The other two were considerably younger, but all were engaged in brisk conversation, almost argument, and as words

came over to Sibbald in the well-known emphatic tones of the master of Bygate, he concluded that horses formed the subject of the discussion.

At the end of the street the old man parted from his associates and ascended the main thoroughfare, which was now silent and deserted. This added to Sibbald's difficulties, for he dared not approach near enough to excite observation, and the turning of a single corner might deprive him of his quarry. When at the top they came to the less regular streets, the young man ventured to run forward, and the passing of a few other people enabled him to get within twenty yards of his father. This movement was fortunate, for at a very short distance Mr. Crozier turned off into a by-street, and if Sibbald had not been near he must inevitably have lost the track. As it was, he could not be absolutely sure of the door at which the other had let himself in, as it fell between two lamp-posts, and there were two doors quite close together. As he was examining the place in this perplexity a policeman came tramping along, and eyed him with suspicion.

“What are you after?”

“Do you know at which house Mr. Crozier lives?”

The man knew nobody of the name there, and did not trouble to disguise his distrust of Sibbald's inquiry. So after taking particular note of the whereabouts of the street, which his want of familiarity with the town necessitated, he regained the tram-line, and set off for the tramp to his lodgings.

His entering awoke Adelina on the sofa, and she leaped up in a fright from her dreams.

“Whatever is the time? Where *have* you been, Charlie? . . . Oh, Sib, you did frighten me!”

“You ought to have gone to bed,” said he sharply, perhaps more annoyed by the confusion of names than he would have cared to admit, for again he had come in with that tender longing for warmth and sympathy, which had been permanently added to his emotions in these days, but which a fatal inopportuneness of touch in Lina came constantly to quench.

“I thought you would like me to sit up for you,” returned Adelina in an injured tone. “I'm always—”

“I do like it, Lina,” he hastened to interpose, as

he dropped on one knee by her side, and caressed the ideal woman in her. "I do like it, my little darling girl. It is good and kind and loving of you, and it was brutal of me to leave you all alone yonder at such a time of night. How did you get back, my pet?"

There was suddenly a reckless tenderness in the man, so impulsive and vigorous a display as to have dismayed a more discerning and sensitive woman after the chilling commencement. Had there been any dispassionate onlooker, it might have appeared that a conscious surmounting of quite a contrary tendency had a greater part in the ardour than the thrill of unheeding, irresistible passion. But, from whatever source, Lina got, and enjoyed, the fervent adoration which Sibbald's soul had at that moment to bestow, and for some instants she resigned herself completely and silently to the transport.

"How did you come, dearest?" he repeated.

"Oh, such fun! I had a friend to bring me, so there!"

With the triumphant exclamation, Lina flung her

arms around his neck, and clasped the hands behind him. But, unknown to her, Sibbald's spirit had escaped her. He was conscious of a shuddering recoil, and had he followed his immediate impulse, he would have flung her from him. This time no voluntary effort availed him. He writhed under her touch, and no possible movement could simulate true passion. It was by no means the import of her words that smote him. For mere vulgar jealousy, so genuine an idealist was not likely to be a subject. It was the tone, the voice, the intolerable obtrusion of something mean, of something less exalted than the enthusiasm which actuated him. It was this that slew the imagination in him, as it had been slain in him before.

Whilst Adelina slept peacefully beside him, Sibbald had to lie awake in a state of agitation. It is a tragical moment when youthful fervour has to come down to prosaic cross-examination of itself; when buoyant instinct is clipped by the tyranny of self-conscious inquiry. It was a moment beyond this by which Sibbald was now confronted.

Answers and consequences thrust themselves upon him with ghastly distinctness. His was not the mind to waver in the recognition of appearances. He would gloss nothing over with roseate self-delusions. He was the opposite of despondent—he was vigorously imaginative, still could he not accept anything for *other* than it was. He did instinctively invest all natural circumstances with *the more* which it is the quality of the human soul to impart; but this is to the magnifying, the glorifying, by no means the distorting, of fact. For one thing, therefore, Sibbald knew that what he had deemed his love for Adelina was a delusion, yet he did not for that revile and repudiate the whole spirit of love. His conception of it rather was at that moment incalculably exalted, for he saw it to be by no means the flimsy superficial quality which in his maiden ignorance he had thought it. Utterly ignorant of the counterpart soul of woman, he had fallen into the common snare of attributing to the first fascinating maiden form every highest essential of ideal womanhood.

It was no doubt this temporary collapse of so

vital a portion of his own life that enabled his father's affairs to exercise such a powerful influence over him. The activity of his emotions in one direction developed his susceptibilities in several others. As the night advanced, indeed, he found that it was the spectacle of his father which principally engaged him. All sorts of compunctions assailed him in connection with it—various balancings of consequences. Whatever the meaning of his father's behaviour, to Sibbald's eye it was, at any rate, sinister, and he knew he was the cause of it. Formerly he had found the amplest justification for himself, but how was it now? In view of his recoiling from the idol to which he had pledged himself—for which he had staked so much—what result had he to put in the scales against his father's existence? A handful of grey ashes which in weight amounted to merely nothing—well, indeed, if they were not far less than nothing.

Sibbald was at last falling off into an uneasy slumber, when a cry from Lina again aroused him. "Charlie!" she cried with startling abruptness. A

rough shake silenced her, but her husband gave up all thought of sleep.

The next morning he was grimly taciturn. When Adelina came down she found him handling a letter, which, on her entrance, he gave to her without a word. This was what she read when she had torn open the envelope :—

“MADAM,—We venture to remind you of the enclosed account, amounting to £4 10s. 6d., which we shall be glad to receive at your earliest convenience. We take this liberty as the goods, you will recollect, were sold at sale prices and upon cash terms. We are, Madam, Yours obediently,

“SIMPSON & CARR.”

From the paper Lina looked to her husband's eyes, and she coloured deeply. There was such a timid, startled look upon her face that it vanquished Crozier's ill-humour, and he held out his hand calmly.

“Is it the bill?” asked he. He just raised his

brows at the figure, and closed his lips. Lina stepped to him.

"I ought to have asked you first, Sib," she faltered. "But—but you are not angry, are you?"

"Angry? No. The sooner we spend our money, the sooner it's done, that's all."

"But you will make plenty as soon as we are settled," ventured the wife reassuringly. The flash lurked for an instant, but was immediately quenched.

"It is as well to suppose so," Sibbald replied with a smile not natural to him. "At any rate, call and pay this this morning."

Therewith he took out a note from his pocket-book and gave it to Lina. She took it, trembling with excitement at the easiness of her victory, but resolving to be more careful in future.

The thought of this inevitable employment, at which his wife's words had so confidently hinted, was by no means out of Sibbald's mind. Every morning did he go out with it, and every night saw it unresolved. The aspect of things had so materi-

ally altered that the calm contemplation of active life, such as he had indulged on the sunny braes around Bygate and Crawston, was no longer possible. The actual stress of civilisation around him confused his faculties and made it impossible for him to decide upon a path for himself. In fancy he felt capable of all, but directly he descended to an examination of the initial practical details, his enthusiasm vanished, and he withdrew powerless. Thus, with whatever vigour he began the day, the later hours of it were inevitably spent in a merely fanciful contemplation of the spectacle around him. He tramped about the town, learning and observing much, but getting farther and farther away from the possibility of the necessary practical employment by which, in plain terms, he would very soon have to gain his bread.

He thought of taking the tram into the town with his wife, but he changed his mind, and upon some pretext set off before she was ready. He walked directly to the street to which he had traced his father the night before, and examined it in daylight.

It was a little off-shoot from a main thoroughfare, with no through passage. Houses occupied only one side of the street, and on the other was a patch of uncovered grass, railed off and standing before the tall, blank, brick side of a school. Some boys were snatching a game of cricket at that moment in the enclosure, and Sibbald watched them absently for a minute or two. Whilst doing so, a figure brushed hastily past him with eyes fixed intently on the ground. At once on the alert, Crozier looked after this passenger, and immediately recognised Daniel Curle. That he himself had escaped the other's observation was certain, and he was glad at the moment that Daniel had been so preoccupied. But there could be little doubt in Sibbald's mind that it must be from his father's house that Curle was coming. Felton, therefore, was presumably in residence with him.

Crozier went after Daniel, and when they had reached a part far enough removed from the compromising locality, he accosted him. Curle eyed his assailant in doubt for an instant (which Sibbald con-

sidered assumed), then extended to him an effusive recognition.

"Why, it is you! But I'm glad to see you. I have long wondered what had become of you. Come away. I'm in a hurry."

Daniel had acquired an abrupt imperious manner from his propagandist and dogmatic habit of mind, which, however unpleasant, Sibbald managed to disregard. So he adjusted himself to his companion's pace along the pavement, and listened lightly to his ready flow of words.

"Why did you drop writing to me?" Curle ran on. "There's a good deal in your arguments, mind, although I must admit I didn't altogether agree with you. But I want a full and exhaustive discussion with you. I believe if we thrash it out we'll be able to work well together. You'll have given up some of your points anyway, now you have come to live in Newcastle."

"You knew I was living here then?" said Crozier dryly, in marked contrast to the tone of his companion.

"Ay, my sister told me in a letter the other day. I was glad to hear it, for you'll get your ideas widened, and a man like you ought to be in the van of the race, and not hidden away herding sheep in the wilderness. Pastoral life breeds prophets, poets, and the like o' that, but it's men of action that we want to-day—men that will carry the world one step forward, and not those that will hap it round with a lot of fresh swaddling clothes. Will you come and have a good talk with me the night?"

Sibbald was quite agreeable, and the appointment was made. But Curle's manner continued the reverse of pleasant to Crozier, and he found himself wondering that this was the brother of Jenniper. As they proceeded, too, it became clear to Sibbald that his companion was not going to refer to his recent visit to the old man's house, and this alone occasioned a certain amount of preoccupation in the Scholar which helped to keep his words few. But on the street was no convenient place for broaching an important inquiry; he was content to put off any remark upon the subject until the evening.

Under these circumstances Sibbald was glad when they came to a building at the entrance to which Daniel said he must leave him. A little more real geniality of aspect entered into the enthusiast's farewell, but Sibbald left him with the full conviction that anything like genuine familiarity was out of the question. Crozier regretted this, as he felt that a male friendship would have helped to counteract disappointments in other directions, and without any clear reason he would have liked Jenniper's brother to have filled such office. As he was now so far off, he decided to postpone his intended visit to his father, and instead he turned off without aim down the first street he came to. Before he had taken many steps he was arrested by something that had caught his eye, and he stood still. It was a sale bill pasted with others on a large blackboard by the doorway of an auctioneer's office that he was suddenly reading, with lips apart, and eyes gathered into an expression of consternation. The bill set forth the peculiar merits of a valuable freehold moorland property known as Bygate Stead, in the county

of Northumberland, with homestead and all the various appurtenances, which was at an early date to be offered for sale by public auction at an hotel mentioned.

Long after he had read every word there printed from first to last, Sibbald's eyes were fixed upon the paper in stupefied abstraction. When, at length, he turned to go onwards, it was without the slightest regard to his direction. He turned this corner and that, just as the pavement led him, without raising his eyes from the ground. When the path got broken around the Cathedral, he looked about him, but without object, and went aimlessly forward again.

"Ha'penny, please," partly aroused him as he passed on to the High Level bridge, and he flung down the necessary copper. Then in the shade of the cyclopean girders his step slackened, and midway over the river he stopped to look down at the scene below.

The clang of gigantic human enterprise smote unheeded on his ear, and the industrial throng of a

whole world did not arouse even a passing thought in him. "TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION" lay branded in stupendous characters over everything upon which he set his eyes, and it was a considerable time before he could dispel this bewildering illusion.

When the change came, it was by way of revolt against the emotional extravagance that had afflicted him. Was Bygate, then, and one family life more than all the world besides? Was a piece of idle sentiment to extinguish the whole outlook of his life, to demolish all the glowing vista through which he had latterly beheld his future progress? Pugnacity was at the root of all Sibbald's enterprise, just as it was at that of his father, and as he glared now on that smoky universe of the Tyne, it was with clenched fist, rather than with a hand amiably extended. This impulse for conflict with material fact again possessed him, and he turned with resolute step to explore once more the haunts of employment. He rapidly descended the Castle Stairs, and so gained the Quayside. He had occasionally thought that some sort of clerkship, at any rate, was

possible to his untrained energies. Such pursuit, therefore, in the first place be his speed.

With a plain matter-of-fact representation of his object, Sibbald sought interviews with the authorities at three separate establishments. The first styled themselves merchants; the second, coal exporters; and the third, timber merchants. It is not likely that the youth received other than considerate treatment, still his errand was an odd one, and no doubt it was characteristically executed. But he made no fourth attempt.

As he walked along after his last fruitless inquiry, his eye caught sight of the wharf whence the Tyne-mouth steamers went, and seeing a boat standing in readiness, he booked, and went on board. It was a fine sunny day, and the blue sky was visible overhead through the canopy of grey smoke. The seagulls played and croaked about the water, and they obtained the whole of this one passenger's attention, to the exclusion of the many other objects of more definitely human interest. This suggestion of the purely natural world came with singular force upon

Sibbald, and his mind wandered to the sea-gulls that bred in the lough behind the hill at Bygate, and that always followed the Bygate plough in spring. With this many other cognate associations crept over him, and led him into a reverie, from which he was not aroused until the end of his journey was reached.

The blue sea and the fresh fragrant breeze which blew from it, intensified the feeling which had come to distract his mind from the thought of industrial enterprise, and the imaginative attitude, which was more natural to him, became fully re-established. It brought with it almost the depression of home-sickness, so alien to him did all his recent experiences appear in the light of this revulsion of feeling. That association with the hill-side and the unobscured sky, which had seemed but a natural attribute of his upbringing, assumed now, as he wandered along the sands, a fundamental significance altogether unsuspected. His marriage, and all the events which gathered round it, had come as a torch to material in him which he had never thought of considering inflammable. Although it had undoubtedly brought

him to a more intelligent tolerance of the various efforts of mankind, it had still intensified, almost transfigured, this old sympathy with the influences of the natural world. Consistent enough as the development no doubt was, the Scholar himself found difficulty in reconciling these two aspects of it. He felt that the natural and the artificial ought to be antagonistic, and that if he cleaved to the one he ought utterly to reject the other.

Into metaphysical abstractions of this kind he penetrated now more deeply than he had ever done hitherto. It was all in a purely instinctive, informal way, for of subtle intellectual tactics, or even needs, he had never had any notion. Instinct had always guided him, and although it was now guiding him still, it was unfortunately in a more conscious, therefore impaired, manner. Circumstances had revealed something of the wheels and springs, where the dial-face had formerly been opaque to him, but he could not tell the time of day so readily.

But it ultimately occurred to Crozier that contemplation so fundamental as this must have practical

outcome. So he went up to the ruins of the old Priory in the hope that practical suggestion might there dawn. It might have seemed simple to acknowledge that his town expedition had proved its unwisdom, and failed, and so return to his old herding at Bygate. But very much rose up in the face of that. Can anybody ever return? Sibbald at any rate knew too well that he could not; that all the old life about which so many years had clustered, had gone never to return. For one thing. *TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION* obtruded itself across—but was not this the least of all? That might conceivably be. . . . As Sibbald meditated, the sound of voices disturbed him, and he looked suddenly to the point whence they had come. Then he darted behind a column.

CHAPTER IX.

COMPACTS.

CROZIER'S eyes had fallen upon Adelina, to his unspeakable amazement. She had two companions, a male and female. From his place of shelter he continued to observe the three as they went in another direction, but he thought that his wife's manner had suddenly altered. It was her voice, in exalted talk and laughter, that had burst upon him. Whilst he watched, he could not see that she spoke or laughed at all. It was impossible that she had seen him.

Abstract considerations were dispelled as effectually as Sibbald could wish. Of course he did not doubt that these were former friends whom Lina had come in the way of, and he did not feel a moment's grudge against such harmless amusement for her ;

but an intolerable pang at the sense of incompatibility with any life of his which he had received from the glimpse was not to be resisted. His old reputation in Braiddale seemed not so extravagant after all, when he had himself to admit an utter abhorrence of this general society with which his wife was so flagrantly associated. *It* typified her exactly, and the perception of all her intolerable qualities which it forced upon him put him in a frenzy.

When they were at a safe distance Crozier swept out of the precincts in the most unreasonable condition yet attained during this day devoted to unreason. He had been hungry the minute before, and had had thoughts of finding a place for dinner. This was all forgotten, and taking the nearest way to the railway station, he returned by the first train to the town. On the way he composed himself a little, and formed the resolution of waiting immediately upon his father. In his present state some definite action seemed imperative, and in this direction only did any course lie open.

On reaching the place he wanted, he selected a

door, and knocked. A servant girl presently answered, and he asked for Mr. Crozier.

"Doesn't live here," and she was closing the door.

"But can you tell me where he does live?"

"Don't know the name."

"Who lives next door?"

"An old gentleman only just come in."

"Thank you." The door closed, and Sibbald stepped to the next one.

All the blinds here were half way down, and to repeated knockings and pulls at the bell Crozier could obtain no response. Just as he gave it up and was stepping to the pavement, his eye caught sight of a face peering at him from a bottom corner of the window, and trying to screen itself. But in an instant it leapt up, and the full figure of Mr. Felton, otherwise Collingwood Brett, was displayed, gesticulating behind the glass. When Felton's eyes had scoured the scene in every direction so far as he could command it, he beckoned Sibbald to come close to the window, which the latter did, and put his ear to the bottom sash.

"How is she, Sib? How is my girl?" came in an eager voice from inside.

"She is enjoying herself at Tynemouth," was the dry reply. "Open the door. I want to talk to you." Felton raised his hands.

"I am imprisoned here. All new patent locks to doors and windows." And the speaker inside laid his finger on the elaborate window fastener. As a passenger came along the pavement, Sibbald walked on, and Felton disappeared. The next moment Crozier heard a knocking at the window, but he did not turn, and he was soon striding away down the highway.

He went into the public library and hurriedly wrote a letter, which he posted when he came out. It was addressed to his father, and he had simply requested an interview. He felt no inclination to go home, and he got through the afternoon as he best could, and towards evening he recollected his appointment with Daniel Curle. The latter's lodgings were at some distance, and when he reached them Sibbald was annoyed to find only an apology awaiting him,

excusing Curle's enforced absence, and begging the visitor to come again the following night. Worn out, Crozier now by various trams made what speed he could to his own abode.

As he entered his sitting-room, he was taken aback by Lina flinging herself into his arms, in a flood of tears.

"What's all this about?" he asked, scarcely in the mood for a conciliatory scene.

"Why—why didn't you come and speak to us?" sobbed Adelina. "Why did you hide from us like that?"

"Come, come, don't be troubled about it, Lina. I was not in a mood for company, that's all."

"But they—they'll think we've quarrelled. I wanted you to see them. It looked so strange."

"But did you tell them that you saw me there?"

The wife faltered an affirmative.

"I had told them before I knew that you would hide away like that. Whatever did you do it for, Sib? I can't—"

"I have told you. I didn't want to see anybody."

"But it was only Leila, and Ch—Mr. Robson."

"I don't care who it was. I didn't want to see anybody at all, and—and I wasn't expecting to meet you there."

"It was all the greatest chance. When I went into the town I happened to meet Leila in Grainger Street, and then we met Mr. Robson, who wanted—"

"All right. I understand all about it. Now sit down, and don't trouble about nothing at all."

"But it's a great deal, I think. It looks as if we had secrets from one another, and I'm sure I haven't. I should have enjoyed it much more if you had been with us."

"Well, surely you can easily explain it to them. Tell them I'm a fool, an idiot, if you like, and that I do that sort of thing."

"But, darling Sib, you don't!" she cried, hugging him again. "I wouldn't have them think you that. Won't you ask Mr. Robson here, some evening, and then we could explain it? He is so nice, and I'm sure you would like him."

"Yes, perhaps that would be the best way," said

Crozier, after an instant's thought. "I'll write a note now. Tell me what to say."

Freeing himself, Sibbald got paper and sat to the table, and between them a suitable note of invitation to Mr. Charles Robson was indited.

Whatever the effect of this upon Crozier, to Lina it was an absolute disposal of the difficulty, and she felt able to regard her day's outing with desirable complacency. It is true she did at moments wonder what could be her husband's real object in behaving so strangely, and what could have taken him to Tynemouth at all, but in the face of the recovery of her own personal comfort, Lina was not one to trouble over perplexing problems. All her thoughts for the next two days, at anyrate, would be required for the proper entertainment of Mr. Charles Robson—not under her own roof, alas! but at least in very respectable lodgings.

With all Sibbald's intentions, it was impossible but that the revolution in his feelings should work some noticeable change in his outward behaviour. To act a caress or any tenderness was beyond his power,

and he didn't attempt it. To all Lina's prattle he did endeavour to return coherent, if not exactly ardent, replies or comments, whatever they cost him.

In the morning was a curt note from his father, appointing twelve o'clock that day for the desired interview, but, oddly enough, it was not written in the old man's handwriting, nor in any one familiar to Sibbald. This the Scholar considered a very undesirable beginning, for his natural pride resented the intrusion of any stranger into what he himself considered a matter of the highest privacy. If he could have known that the secretary had been none other than the redoubtable Daniel Curle, it is doubtful whether Sibbald's construction of the occurrence would have been any more favourable.

The fact was that Daniel's inability to keep his appointment the previous evening was occasioned by the affairs of Mr. Crozier the elder. A piece of singular good fortune had put Curle into communication with the old farmer at a critical moment, and the speculative enthusiast had not failed to profit by the incident. Daniel's speculation had, of late days,

taken a somewhat altered direction, and one in which it seemed to him that the master of Bygate might, if properly managed, be of considerable assistance. Thus it was that the lawyer's clerk, socialist, spiritualist, and what not, had strained his versatile faculties to the conciliation of so rough a subject as Mr. Maxwell Crozier, the self-constituted last of his line.

At the old man's own demand the evening had been appropriated to the discussion of his affairs, and not unnaturally they had been discussed over whisky and a little water. The discovery of Daniel was a source of vociferous satisfaction to Mr. Crozier.

"My sartie, but ye hae saved my aith, Dan'l!" he would exclaim with a beaming countenance. "I swore a muckle aith that I wad hae nae dealings wi' thae lawyer chaps in my lifetime again, and if I hadna lighted on ye, I dinna ken what I wad hae done. Ye'se be weel paid for it, my man, I'se warr'nd ye. I'd never hae thought that ye'd become siccan a handy chiel. Fill your glass, man."

The whole conduct of the sale of Bygate had thus

been entrusted to Curle, and he was prosecuting the matter with the greatest efficiency. Whilst they were talking this particular evening, the postman delivered Sibbald's letter, and Crozier went to unlock the letter-box. When he came in brandishing the envelope, a strange light was in his eyes, which Curle regarded reflectively. The old man recognised the handwriting, and the effect of it required some instant counteraction.

"I ken nicely whae it's come frae," he exclaimed fiercely, shaking the letter on high between his fingers. "But it's just naething to me—naething at a'. Here, Dan'l, lad, see what the fallow has to say to us."

The letter was flung to the table, and as Curle opened it, Crozier took a draught from his tumbler.

"He wants to see you, that's all," said Daniel; "wants you to fix a time."

"But I'll no see him. I hae done wi' him and a' the like o' him. He wants money, likely!"

"Not very likely," observed Curle sententiously. "You'd better see him."

"But I'll no see him, I tell ye," roared the other. "Will ye dictate to me on sicna affair? Do ye think I dinna ken my own mind?"

"He may misunderstand your refusal," was Daniel's calm response.

"What do you mean?"

"He'll think you're afraid of him."

Crozier's face turned crimson, and he seized Daniel's shoulder, but the latter never blenched.

"It is only for your own honour that I advise it. Of course if you would rather—"

"My honour, do you say? . . . Then I'll see him. Just write twa-three wawds to tell him to be here at twal o'clock the morn."

As the old man paced the floor restlessly, the wily Curle scribbled the necessary instructions in one of the feigned hands he had at his disposal, smiling almost contemptuously the while.

This little episode was thus speedily disposed of, and they reverted to the discussion of practical questions arising out of the sale of the property. The address of Daniel was conspicuous, and his

method of managing his difficult subject extremely skilful.

"There's no question of entail that I can see in the deeds," remarked Curle.

"Entail, you blockhead!" laughed Crozier. "Do you think ony Crozier wad hae his lands entailed? Do ye think ony man o' the true Bygate breed wad hae to ask the leave o' his ain pups to dispone house gear or onything he ha'd a mind tee? Tarr'ble little ye ken o' the maitter, my man. It's a' clear and straightforrard I tell you. If ye're getting daft we'll just hae done wi' it, and ha'd away to the club. I hae to see Henderson at eight, ye ken."

In a short time accordingly the two were on their way down the street to the club into which the old fellow had been introduced through Daniel's instrumentality. Curle accompanied his singular *protégé* all the way, and when he had seen him securely established, he himself went out. He plunged into the obscure by-ways in the vicinity of the gaol, and by a circuitous route at last reappeared at the very door from which he had but so recently departed

with Crozier. Having cast a stealthy glance around, he drew a key from his pocket, and without noise let himself into the house.

All was silent within, for the thumping of the heart in the room immediately to the right he could not hear, however loud to the possessor of it. It was dusk outside, and in the passage here it was nearly dark. Suddenly the stroke of a match illuminated Curle's features and the old Bygate furniture together. As he held out his light, Daniel perceived a face in the doorway just beside him, and then he had to drop the match.

"How in Heaven's name did you get in?" asked Felton in a voice from which the paroxysm of terror had hardly gone.

"Speir me nae questions and I'll tell ye nae lies. But what in Heaven's name are you doing there? Light the gas."

"Did he lend you the key? . . . It is impossible. . . ."

"You forget that I have intercourse with the invisible world," said Curle in what might have been

quite a serious tone. "I can enter closed doorways, at any rate when I want to hold converse with the dead. I want to talk to you."

Still trembling from head to foot, Felton recommended that they should go into the back room, and there they went.

"Have you made up your mind yet?" was Daniel's first demand in a peremptory voice.

"I have, and I cannot be a party to it."

"Are you so content then with cultivating your philosophy under conditions such as these?"

"I cannot pretend to be that, but to be plain, *that* course cuts me off for ever from my daughter, and—"

"Psh!" interposed the other vehemently, dispelling with a contemptuous gust Felton's stock objection. "Haven't I told you that she will never be a daughter to you again? It is impossible. Women are like that. . . . But look here," added Curle with a flash of inspiration; "if I get you an interview with your daughter and you find her unmanageable, will you swear two things? To return

here and to assist me in the undertaking I have mentioned ?”

“ If Adelina is finally and irrevocably lost to me I will swear to those two points,” said Felton with an alacrity which bespoke the sanguine feeling of safety from his oath. “ Yes, yes, I will swear that, my dear Daniel. If she is lost to me, then have I nothing but a shattered life to work out.”

“ But you want new ground, you say, to work out your philosophy, even on shattered conditions—to get this fresh start for which you are so anxious. What newer ground can you wish for than out yonder ?”

“ Yes, it would be glorious. I know that *there* it would be possible to live only for the future. Oh, I can feel how the spirit would soar in freedom from the shackles of past miscalculations ! A clearing in the primeval forest, a hut built with my own hands ! You tempt me sorely, Daniel.”

“ Look here, man,” said Curle with a grim earnestness amounting almost to passion. “ You have been useful to me, and I admit that I cannot possibly

carry out all this without your co-operation. But that co-operation I must have. It will benefit you as much as myself. Can't you see the infinite horizon that it opens out to you? The undreamt-of freedom from—"

"Yes, yes, I can see. I can feel all that ; but—my daughter !"

His companion took several hurried paces across the floor in a state of great excitement.

"You shall see her." And before Felton could add a single word of asseveration, protest, entreaty, or other characteristic kind, Daniel had left him, and had escaped into the street with so little disturbance of the quiet which reigned through the weird house, that but for the puff of cool night air that swept to him through the passage, Felton might actually have supposed that his visitor had departed in the preternatural manner at which he was fond of hinting.

Daniel's arrangements were immediately made. He decided that whilst Sibbald was engaged with his father at noon the next day, a visit should be paid to Adelina and a secret appointment on Felton's behalf

entered into. But to Daniel's chagrin he was engaged at the office the following morning until one o'clock, so that opportunity escaped him, but,—but—Good! The postponed visit of Sibbald to himself would take place that evening, and it would not be Daniel Curle if he did not capture from it another chance for a secret visit to Adelina.

At half-past six o'clock Sibbald was announced to Daniel, just as the latter was sitting down to tea.

"Just in time!" cried Curle, with the same effusive cordiality that he had resolved upon during their last interview. "So sorry I was called away last night. I hope it didn't inconvenience you to come up again to-night."

"I shouldn't be here if it had done," replied Crozier in a tone contrasting with that of his host.

"Grand! Now that's the tone I like. Conventional rot I can't stand. I always say what I mean myself, and I like others to do the same."

Sibbald took his seat at the table, and was in real truth very thankful for a cup of tea, as he had not touched food since the morning. He had kept his

appointment at twelve, and had gathered scant consolation from the interview. He had not been home since.

In response to his summons, Felton had opened the door with a benevolent smile of recognition, which the youth had ignored. When he was shown into the room off the passage, there appeared his father, again dressed with scrupulous propriety and enthroned in the old Bygate arm-chair reading the morning paper. He rose when Sibbald came in, and he bade him a cold good-morning. In the face of it, the young man could not extend his hand to be ignominiously rejected. As the door was shut, Sibbald gathered courage.

"I have come, father, to see if we cannot come to some possible terms of agreement. I am quite aware now that the whole of the fault has been mine, and I am prepared to submit to your wishes."

The old man seemed almost to bow, coughed, and then said that he didn't see what they had to agree to or discuss.

Sibbald was struck with unspeakable astonishment

at the change in his father. He could not have thought it possible that mere change of locality and conditions could have wrought such a transformation in a character apparently so inflexibly settled as that of "aa'd Crozier of Bygate." Of course the vernacular accent was still strong on his tongue, but the broad dialect was pruned to a remarkable dègree, and had become under this conscious restraint merely a picturesque embellishment. An old-world dignified politeness, restrained just now by a rigid hauteur, sat imposingly upon him, and reversed ludicrously the relative positions hitherto usual in interviews between father and son. Sibbald suspected that he was indeed no Crozier if this were the typical one of the race.

"I see for one thing that you think of disposing of your property at Bygate," Sibbald went on.

"I am not thinking,—I am *gaun* to dispose of it by public auction on the 24th day of this present month, sir. Were you thinking of making a bid for it?"

"Not in hard cash," exclaimed the other with additional fervour in his voice and heightened colour

in his features. "The only bid I have to make for it comes out of my heart and not out of my pocket. It is not likely that I can see the house where I was born, where you were born, and where many another of my forebears was born—the braes where I have played and heard the lambs, the plovers and the whaups through the whole of my existence—it is not likely that I can see all this pass into the hands of strangers without a protest, and without making one strong effort to rescue them."

"I am obliged to you for your attentions," returned the old man; "but I cannot see what concern you have in the maitter. I have put the business into the hands of my—my agent, and nothing—no, by God, *naething* at a'!—shall make me alter my mind about it. So if this is all you have to say to me we had better just take our ways."

"Will you only consent to put it off for six months longer?" urged Sibbald in an altered tone, chilled by the other's unnatural behaviour, "so that I may have one chance of making— But no, that is useless! you do not wish me to have it; you have no heart or

feeling for any emotion that might help me to plead for every blade of grass, every whin spike, every blackberry and heather-bell that grows on the bonnie braes."

The youth had turned away abruptly, as his feelings overpowered him, as all the sense of defeat of late days swept over him and showed him how powerless he was to stem the evil current which flowed against him; and at that moment old Crozier cast a look at him that might have changed the whole tenor of the interview and all involved in it. But Sibbald did not see the glance, and one instant was enough for the elder to regain all the volume of blind and stubborn pride that had driven him thus far and which could alone sustain him in the part he had undertaken.

"It *is* a' useless, my man," said he, in the old inflexible tone with which his son was only too familiar. "Do you think I dinna ken my ain mind in a matter like yon? Do you think I'd be pairting wi' it if I wanted the heath and the whun-busses ye talk about? What are they to me? What hae I ever gotten out of 'em but dule and—"

The voice had been gradually rising to a point of angry vehemence, which threatened to sweep all new-born dignity to the winds, when there was this sudden check. Sibbald turned abruptly at it, and beheld the cold, impassive old gentleman to whom he had originally entered, taking up the newspaper from the table. A few words of formal dismissal, and the young man was again in the street.

It was from this unsatisfactory interview that the afternoon alone divided Sibbald as he now sat at Daniel Curle's tea-table. The mood in which the Scholar had presented himself was plain, and was highly satisfying to his entertainer. Daniel had been prepared for a closer scrutiny in his resolve to gather the result of the meeting which he had himself arranged. He was fully assured beforehand of the impossibility of anything adverse to his own calculations, and there can be little doubt that some means rather of furthering these had in his judgment lain in this aggravation of the disagreement between old Crozier and his son.

In reality, Curle's mind had of late passed onwards from the radical enthusiasms which had so wholly engrossed his energies some months ago; but in his conversation with Sibbald he never allowed this to be seen. He launched at once into the theoretical considerations with which he had saturated his mind, and really spoke so convincingly and eloquently that he very soon succeeded in drawing Crozier out of himself by interesting him in the problems which agitate an industrial democracy.

"I have often thought of that speech you gave us on the Quayside, you know. It was not at all bad, —not at all. I confess it floored me at the time, but I'm not so sure that there isn't a grain of the real thing in it. Decentralisation will have to come undoubtedly if many of our worst evils are to be adequately dealt with. Are you going to abandon entirely your existence on the grass, of which you spoke so warmly?"

"Rather the opposite. I have been thinking of returning to it exclusively."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense! Now that's where

you're wrong. You fellows get carried away by your poetical emotions. You cannot live on 'em, I tell you. They're all very well in doses by way of physic, but for daily bread—bosh !”

“It is simply a question of what employment you are fit for,” said Sibbald, relaxing a little as his interest was awakened.

“That is humbug, too. I assert that any educated man nowadays,—any man, that is, with the virgin vigour of the down-trodden intellect, can fill any post in the universe that he likes to put his hand to.”

“I am glad to hear you find it so,” laughed Crozier ironically.

“It is a scientific fact, sir,”—a stock phrase with Daniel. “But apart from this, are you really going back to Bygate ?”

Curle's eyes were fixed in innocent scrutiny upon his companion's face as he put the question.

“I don't know where I shall go to,” said Crozier with the irritability of a sensitive man under examination.

“Now, my dear fellow, do nothing rash. We

can't afford to lose you. I have made all sorts of plans for getting a harvest out of your vigorous energy. Don't disappoint us. Just take a day to-morrow on the top of Simonside or Cheviot, and think it over. You'll come back the day after. I wish I could go with you."

Sibbald stared at the table in silence.

"Or will you meet two or three friends here at four-thirty? I get off early to-morrow. I'd like well—"

"I don't think I shall be in the town to-morrow, but if I am I'll come."

"You will really? Then that'll do." This seemed to settle something in Daniel's mind, and he plunged again into abstract concerns.

Sibbald did not stay long, nor did Curle use any extraordinary persuasion.

Daniel considered that he had settled the point which was his chief anxiety at the moment. His object was to make sure of a moment when Sibbald would be away from his wife, so that he might without delay put into execution those other plans on

Felton's behalf. Curle could not have given any definite reason for keeping the interview a secret from young Crozier; but so he wished it. As it fell out, the scheme of waiting upon Adelina whilst Sibbald was awaiting him at his own lodgings had not been necessary, for without any premeditation the Scholar took train the following day about noon, and was an hour or two later riding over the fells towards Braiddale, when it suddenly occurred to him that Mr. Charles Robson was to meet him that afternoon, and he had sent no word to Lina of his absence. But in a kind of careless resignation he left things to take their course.

CHAPTER X.

DIFFERENT VIEWS.

As the clock on the chimney-piece chimed two musical quarters, Adelina looked up from her chair, and saw it was half-past four. She threw her novel down, and went to the window. It was really too bad of Sibbald to be so late, for any minute Mr. Robson might appear, and she had been so intent upon the virtuous resolution of showing the utter absurdity of those appearances at Tynemouth a couple of days ago.

Whilst she stood in this unsettled state, the step of a stranger coming up to the door caused her to draw back. Her heart had given one leap at first in the expectation of its being one or other of the looked-for figures; but the tremor instantly passed when she saw the unknown face. It was with considerable

surprise, therefore, that she soon received the announcement of the servant that there was a visitor for herself.

"Mr. Crozier isn't at home, and I don't know when he will be," said Lina curtly, fancying it a mistake of the girl's.

"He wants to see you, m'm."

"What name, then?"

"Mr. Girl, I think he said."

Although Adelina was unable to recall any such name as amongst those of her former acquaintance, or attach any recognition to the figure she had just seen come to the house, she resolved to admit the visitor, and in walked Daniel Curle.

He began by a brief reference to his relationship with the family of Lina's acquaintance at Angry-haugh up the Braid water, and upon that score the young wife immediately assumed an aspect of charitable condescension and patronage, which Daniel hastened to waive.

"I merely mentioned this to reassure you," said Curle, lowering his tone almost to one of familiarity,

"for I have come on a very private and confidential errand. You know Mr. Felton—"

Lina started, and showed symptoms of immediate agitation, but signed to him to proceed.

"He is living in Newcastle, and wishes to have a private interview with you. . . . Have no fear of me. I may tell you," he added, in a lower tone, "that I know everything. It will require some little management for me to arrange the meeting, but—"

"I—I don't want to see him. I can't see him."

"But in the face of his affection for you," urged Curle, secretly rejoicing at the other's attitude, "you will try to overcome this objection. It is, of course, quite natural after what has occurred. I have constantly told him that it is impossible for human nature to take up such a broken thread; but I do beg you to see him once again, to tell him so yourself. Nothing else will satisfy him, for he lives constantly in the hope of having you again beside him."

"How is that possible when I am married? Even if things had not been as they are, I should have left home when I married."

“To be sure, so I tell him; but he sees a difference. He even goes so far as to say that if you cannot be as before, he will leave the country, emigrate to South Africa, and begin life afresh there on new soil.”

Daniel saw the light appear in Lina's eyes for which he had hoped, and he knew that *his* schemes were safe.

“Why didn't he do that at first?” asked Adelina impulsively. “How can he ever start afresh here? He would then never have got into the hands of that horrid old man. But how did he get away?”

“He has not yet got away. It is just that that makes our difficulty. If, however, he finds you of the same mind, I have promised to assist him in making his escape, and I will do it. I have particular advantages for the purpose, which, of course, I cannot reveal in detail; but I can assure you that his interests will be looked after. I do not forget past kindnesses, and I am not ungrateful. Do not hint at what I say to him, for he thinks I wish to get him away for my own purposes. It is for his good.

What if he should chance to be discovered here by any of his former acquaintances? All sorts of difficulties might arise. He might even get—to prison.”

Curle had seen enough to know that in this quarter there would be no difficulty. It was obvious that Adelina devoutly wished this mythical parent finally off her mind, and sufficiently far off to remove all risk of his again interposing either in her affairs or reputation. She had, since her return, discovered that, at any rate, certain young gentlemen had extended their sympathy and commiseration to her, which feeling must inevitably be affected by the sensational revelation of her father's duplicity, and which feeling Lina had no desire to sacrifice, and especially in view of her husband's unintelligible development just now.

“Oh, beg him to go!” said Lina fervently.

“He refuses to go without having seen you.”

“Then I will see him—once, just for a short time.”

With business-like despatch, Daniel at once arranged the details of the meeting, for he himself was

in a hurry; and he was only just clear of the premises when another gentleman arrived.

"Rehearsing the delights of widowhood?" said Mr. Charles Robson facetiously, after the preliminary greeting, as he took a seat in the arm-chair opposite Adelina, and leaned forward to bring the tips of his expanded fingers together.

"Oh, isn't it too bad?" cried his companion, blushing with genuine vexation. "He promised to be here faithfully, and I have not set eyes on him since ten o'clock this morning."

"Never!" was the gentleman's expressive comment, delivered with an arch glance of suppressed humour habitual with him, and at which Adelina tried to giggle, in order to pass off the annoyance she felt.

"I feel quite nervous about him," Lina went on, "for I can't think he would stay away purposely after what I said."

"Was it a terrible curtain lecture? Perhaps you drove him away. There *have* been cases, you know, of that kind of thing."

"But it is so mysterious!" interposed Lina, in a

tone of real trouble. "It is so unlike him to go on like this. I cannot make it out, and I can't get a word from him."

"And, on the whole, you think I had better go?"

"Go? Don't be so absurd, Charlie!" said Lina, jumping up and going to the window. "An old friend like you can take pity on me, at any rate. Besides, he'll be here every minute. He must be here soon. We'll just wait till five, and then I'll call in the tea."

So Lina took her seat again in a more cheerful and resolute frame of mind, and Mr. Robson regaled her with the varied news which his circle and circumstances had put him in the way of.

Some twenty-three years would be the age of this young gentleman, and he was understood to be looking into the law with a view to the bar. That is, nominally, in some loose way he was attached to the student department of a solicitor's office, his father having received representations from some quarter which he considered influential that a preliminary training in the practical affairs of the law was invaluable.

able for those aiming at the higher branches. This arrangement suited Mr. Robson well, as he got all the prestige attaching to such a dignified position, and was free even from the very moderate degree of discipline incident to definite articles. The consequence was that the law, outside the branches of it which had immediate reference "to the ring," was the last subject of the young gentleman's consideration. His plan of life, too, was not exalted by a consciousness of social inferiority from which he could not escape, and which was incidental to the unsavoury trade (albeit on a considerable scale), whereby his father had attained to vested property. But, no doubt, Mr. Robson's social consideration was quite equal to his tastes, for "better to rule in hell than serve in heaven" is an opinion inherited by a goodly section of humanity.

With young women of a giggling turn Charlie Robson was highly popular, and he had always been thought to give a fair (or perhaps by some an unfair) share of his regard to Miss Adelina Brett. Lina herself had, for some time, hoped for some substantial

outcome from this predilection (which she had been conscious of returning to the full), and perhaps it was not the least grudge she bore against her father for his untimely and ignoble demise that he had been the means of shattering these expectations. But since they *had* all been so rudely shattered, there was something distinctly flattering in the fact that a gentleman of such prominence should continue his considerate attentions to her, after that disgrace of her father's, in lodgings, and in the face of her very questionable marriage also.

As Adelina, therefore, poured out the tea to the playful insinuations of her solitary guest, disappointment at Sibbald's absence advanced rapidly to resentment, or, at any rate, pique, and from that to a distinct enjoyment of the situation. After all, if he was here, she was quite sure that he would only throw a cloud over the proceedings, for his dulness had been intolerable lately, whilst this inimitable Charlie—Lina rippled over at his jokes, and showed not the slightest inclination to repress his jocularities, whatever the breadth or colour of it occasionally.

"You weren't at 'The Tyne' last night? Oh, it was awfully good. Really A1, you know. I rather thought I saw your husband there. Was he, do you think? Of course I couldn't be sure."

The remark was made in a singularly innocent way for Mr. Robson, and even he was astonished for a moment at the effect of it upon his hearer. Instead of merriment, Adelina's eyes shot petulant anger, not at the speaker, but at the vacant window, and her face coloured deeply. Yes, he *was* out last night! Whilst she, on the other hand, was particularly low-spirited at home. But, oh, the treachery! He came back unusually grumpy, having left, no doubt, all his laughter with the actress he had been beholding. It was all through Lina's brain in an instant.

"Oh, yes, I expect it would be," said she at last in a tone which could not be mistaken, for the pride which smothers its mortifications was not the kind Adelina was rich in, and of such a thing as sacred feeling she knew nothing. "Well, I should not have thought it of him."

The look of understanding which Lina permitted

to be exchanged between them showed her utter obliviousness even of the commonest sensibility. She might have been sharing, to the full, the cynical triumph over matrimonial absurdities which characterised the mature and magnanimous philosophy of her companion. In truth, this was very far from Adelina's situation, but such is the penalty to frail humanity of an insufficient ballast. Merely vacuous pique could, with its airy puff, drive her amongst the shoals of grimmest tragedy, and she be never the wiser.

"I expect I was mistaken—"

"But I am sure you were not. Isn't it too bad? He'll have gone to something else to-night. What is there going on?"

Mr. Robson shrugged his shoulders as at nothing particular, but specified two or three things, whilst Lina kept her gleaming eyes restlessly upon him. Under such behaviour the visitor, not unnaturally, exaggerated the condition at which Crozier's early married life had arrived. He himself generally gave six months, in some favoured instances, until the

birth of a first child ; but in no case would he have accepted evidence of the survival of sentimental feelings beyond that under the matrimonial bond. But this *éclaircissement* (Mr. Robson's own word for the development referred to) had fallen unusually early, for he discerned in it more than the ordinary everyday tiff, which might begin any time after leaving the church porch.

"You'll have to retaliate, that's all. The day for impropriety and that kind of thing is gone by, you know. Ladies are *in*, and I don't blame 'em if they take to a bit of slogging. They have been kept fielding long enough, don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do indeed," exclaimed Lina warmly, her all-but tears changing rapidly, under such agreeable handling, to giggling ecstasy. "We have been made servants and slaves,—by some kinds of men anyway. But my husband hasn't been that kind, you know. I'm sure nobody could have treated me better until just lately. He's tired of me already, I suppose. But I *will* retaliate. I can look after myself I'm quite sure, if nobody else will look after me. I'll go

to anything I like. I don't see why women should sit at home and mope."

"There can be no conceivable reason for it. But look here, why not join our little party, then, for Hexham on Friday? Leila is going, and two or three others. There won't be more than five. I'll let you know who, if you think you can manage it."

Adelina looked at him with delight.

"I certainly will manage it. It is very good of you to ask me." And Lina burst into unfeigned rapture at this excellent opportunity of putting into execution at once her design for independent amusement. The details of the expedition afforded them a topic of conversation whilst the tea-things were being removed.

Two more musical quarters sounded from the chimney-piece, and, as Robson looked up, the hands registered half-past six. Still Sibbald had not come. With his watch in his hand, to compare it with the time announced, the visitor spoke of going,—engagement at seven. Adelina pleaded for a little longer; her husband might come in. With a characteristic

twinkle, Mr. Robson was very sorry, but really couldn't.

"But on Friday,—Central Station at 9.30. And—bring Mr. Crozier if he'll come."

"He—" but catching his eye, Lina burst into laughter, as she followed him out of the room.

With her feet extended on the hearth-rug, Lina indulged the random reverie into which the tendency of the day had led her. She had been vexed with Sibbald occasionally before, but she had not been conscious of definite estrangement from him personally. So disturbed was she in spirit to-night that she felt if he entered the room at that minute she would have to go out, or else speak to him petulantly. What a contrast he now seemed to that delightful visitor, for instance, that had just left her! What could possibly have induced her—have so deluded her? Twilight and dusk crept around her, and still she strayed in the endless mazes in which she had got entangled. Whither it led, and if there were any way out, she did not inquire. The mere turns and twists of the paths fascinated her, and on, and on she went,

regardless of the starting-point as of the goal. Mere wandering, as wandering, offered its allurements, and they proved irresistible.

By half-past ten Lina had got into a state of real alarm, for Sibbald had not appeared. She went to talk with the landlady, tried to trace with her every possible cause of her husband's absence, and as the clock struck eleven, had to consent to go to bed. Not to sleep, however, for what had been flowers along that mazy path some hours before, now appeared as vague and grisly spectres. After fronting them as she best could for some time by the gas light, at last she had to give it up, and finding the child's refuge of tears beneath the bed-clothes, in that situation she fell asleep.

In the morning there were two letters, both addressed to Mrs. Crozier. One consisted of a few words of explanation from her husband, written from Bellingham. The other was signed Daniel Curle, and was simply to ask her (in accordance with her promise) to be on the terrace by the bowling green in Heaton Park, at twelve o'clock *precisely* that day, instead of at

the place formerly appointed. Her husband's letter Adelina succeeded in taking nonchalantly. With the morning light all her new-born resentment was awake again, and she was intent alone upon asserting her own independence as Mr. Robson had suggested. The other letter caused her some misgivings. It was a fact (which she did not pause to examine) that, her own father though he must undoubtedly be, she had not the smallest spark of filial or other feeling remaining towards this man Felton. She did not know what her feeling towards her father in the old days had been. He was her father, then, and there was an end of it; presumably she "loved" him. But now this bankrupt nondescript, an undesirable acquaintance, not to say relative, from every possible point of view,—how could she pretend to display any particle of kindness towards him? With the very thought of him, that unlucky disguise of a dirty, unkempt fiddler rose irresistibly before her, repelling and disgusting her.

Still, if it were to be the means of finally removing him, Adelina was resolved to endure this meeting.

It was an open-air place, and she was determined that the interview should be short. The park appointed was at no great distance from where she lived, and as assisting her to escape observation, she was thankful when about eleven the rain began. At least a quarter of an hour before noon, Lina was walking to and fro on the path before the seats, a solitary waterproofed figure, as the weather did not invite others to that kind of recreation. Ere long she saw a man approaching at a quick step along the path, at right angles to her, hidden under an umbrella. The recognised gait sent a thrill through her, but when she caught sight of the unfamiliar shaven face (disguise which Felton was still bound to retain), the incipient emotion was instantly extinct.

Felton himself was in a state of great agitation from the novel sense of freedom as well as the prospective interview upon which he felt so much to hang. Long before he reached his daughter he tried to read her features, in order to forecast the reception awaiting him. He observed that she did

not take one single step in his direction, such as eager affection would have prompted, and his heart fell at the augury. Nor did she smile, nor extend her hand when he came up.

"Are you still afraid of me?" he ejaculated in dismay, as he stared at the blank expression of her features.

"I don't know. Oh, I don't know what it is."

"But I am your own father, Lina," he continued in a voice of anguish. "Look at me—you must see that I am. Think of all the past days, months and years we have had together. Can all that be cancelled in a moment?"

"You are not my father," exclaimed the other with unexpected vehemence, "you are not the man that I always felt to be my father, for he would never have acted as you have done. You have yourself broken the past, and I cannot call it back again. Try how I will, I cannot call you—feel you to be my father. Let me go now. I cannot talk to you."

"Lina, for God's sake hear me once again! My

very life depends upon the result of this interview. It is because you misunderstand me that you cannot call me father. Like him—like everybody, you think me a common bankrupt, a common criminal. I am not so. Do feel, my own girl, that life is more than meat, and body than raiment ! It was to start a new life, on nobler and higher principles, that I died to the past. It is that I may be more a father to you that I repudiate all the base shackles of my former life. It is not by my will that I have come to the town again, to the dark realm of Beelzebub, of which I was a subject far, far too long. All my desire, and my only desire, is to live on God's earth, in the light of God's sun, and doing only that work which God ordained to be done. Can you think that all *that* is of God ?" he cried excitedly as he pointed towards the grey smoke overhanging the town.

Adelina was not given to the examination of first causes, and Felton's perverted interpretation of them was by no means calculated to promote his suit. It simply added to that mystification of her mind which was, indeed, as much the cause of her aliena-

tion as any plain emotion. Under simpler and more skilful handling Lina might have been regained yet, but it was plain that to all appeal from this man she was proof. She stared at the pavilion roof through the rain, and wished for the end of it.

"If you knew to what your heartlessness will drive me, you would fall upon my neck," exclaimed the man in a severer tone. "You will drive me a criminal from the land, to die an outcast on some African desert, or be killed by savage races. Will this be a pleasant memory for you? Will you not wish, when it is too late, that you had listened to a parent's entreaty?"

"The blame will not be mine," asserted the young woman in a harsher tone than he expected. "I shall not have driven you out. And how can you speak of heartlessness when you could allow me to weep over your grave, to be left without a—"

"Adelina, no more!" The man strode away as he made this exclamation, but after taking a few paces he returned. "Know then, that this is our farewell meeting; that I shall soon have gone where

no word of yours can follow me. Every link with this old country and life will I cut off—yes, every one, though my very heart's blood goes with it. To be mistaken and misunderstood by your nearest, by the child that you have nursed upon your knee, is—is too bitter. But perhaps—His ways are not as our ways—perhaps it is only to prove His beneficence. Every tie must be broken. Only upon new soil is this absolutely to be attained. It would be mockery to ask for a kiss, even for a hand-clasp. Dead—dead!”

Before Lina could utter a single word, Felton had gone. So confounded was she by his impulsive behaviour that she could only stare after him from where she stood. The rain fell more audibly on her umbrella, and she heard a cuckoo from a tree hard by. Once, at about a hundred yards' distance, Felton paused and turned back, but after only a moment's hesitation he hurried out of sight. Adelina returned at greater leisure.

Felton was driven onwards by a paroxysm of despair. He cared not now what happened to him

after this. Up to this moment he had scarcely heard Daniel Curle's designs against old Crozier with any seriousness, so assured was he that they could never concern him. Now he accepted them in their entirety. He would give his hand with recklessness to anything, so long as a new life on a new soil was the result of it for himself. This man of many experiences had the same unquestioning confidence in the balm of untried conditions as the most juvenile philosopher. Give him these new conditions, cut him off from all the old cables that had moored him to an unsatisfying life, and the ideal life would be at once possible for him.

Directly he appeared at the door of old Crozier's house, it was opened from within, and one glance was enough to give Curle the assurance he expected.

"She was there?"

Felton nodded, and vanished into the back room. There he sank into an arm-chair.

Daniel gave him time. Pacing to and fro in silence, he cast a glance from time to time at the dejected figure, but in reality he was absorbed in his

own triumph. High schemes flitted through his brain. He cared not through what soil he strode to them, or over whose body. Fed for years on quasi-intellectual speculation, without the aid of any consistent thread of character, he had now attained to a rare atmosphere of intellectual and moral chaos. His power of projection was unlimited, and his self-confidence equalled it. At length he saw that Felton was gazing at him, and he stood still.

"You agree to my terms? . . . Follow my instructions, and there is absolute security."

There was the slightest quaver in his voice, and his lips remained parted.

"Yes, I will do it," said Felton in a sepulchral voice, and an aspect which corresponded; then Daniel rubbed his hands.

"The sale is on Friday," the latter went on, as if recapitulating to himself; "I have the Abstract ready, and in a title so old there can hardly be any requisitions. I shall do my utmost to complete in a fortnight; but"—looking up to Felton again—"I shall see you, and keep you informed. Hold your-

self in readiness to act at any time. . . . Only those certificates. The purchase money he will give me authority to receive."

"Yes, yes, I will do anything—but leave me now. I must be alone. You can know nothing of this. Go!"

"If you betray me," said Curle leaning forward to his companion's face, but Felton leapt up.

"Go, I say! What is your personal safety to my—my—" but the man's voice broke, and his sentence was uncompleted. With a final glance at him, Curle departed without another word.

Adelina too was unusually agitated as she walked homewards. Her life was suddenly becoming so full of distracting elements that the old careless attitude to the concern of the hour was no longer possible. Although she had thought by this interview to dispose of her father at anyrate, she now found that the result was not so complete as she had expected. The man's voice rang in her ears with its note of genuine trouble and affection, but what else *was* she to do? The question rose as an unanswer-

able moral defence to any injured sensibility with which she may have been affected. Had not he begun the trouble? Was not the whole distress the direct result of his own behaviour? And not his own distress alone either. Had he not imposed upon her all those hideous months at Bygate, with their pains and mortifications, culminating in this—this—how was she to characterise this deplorable marriage? She now saw it to be an agonising mistake. Mr. Robson might easily have been hers after all. She could declare it in the face of anybody. In her simplicity Lina saw nothing complex in Mr. Robson's philosophy. If he was attentive to her still, how infinitely more attentive if he had found her a languishing maiden! So Lina argued, for with all her frivolity she was instinctively innocent.

It was with this subject once again uppermost that she came to her door, when she suddenly remembered that Sibbald had spoken of returning by the 12.45 train. So in a state of trepidation she went in.

CHAPTER XI.

A BACKWARD GLANCE.

OUT here on the hills it was an exquisite day, and Sibbald again found the natural influences affect him very forcibly. In addition to the subtle rippling of his spirit caused by the play of the fragrant breeze, he instinctively cast a professional eye upon the various "braird," the early cereal blades of the cultivated fields, as well as upon the ewes and lambs on the upper lands, and was aware of an unwonted peace of mind in the contemplation. But when in the face of it, the thought of the fate of Bygate came suddenly upon him, it came with added bitterness, and he would dig his heels into the horse's sides and scamper forward.

It was the need of a free breath that had driven him from the town so erratically, and he had come

without any definite object in his mind. Although he had come along the familiar route he had had no thought of visiting Bygate. A strong craving for old haunts, which had entered into his very being, had certainly urged him in this direction, and now continued to allure him onwards from one point to another. The farther he advanced, more and more remote from him did he feel those town scenes and all the activity they implied, and with increasing poignancy did he realise the mistake he had made. Essentially of the peasant constitution, with a spice of imagination superadded, only in the pastoral silences could Sibbald's soul really find its level and its congenial enterprise.

Before reaching Crawston he turned along the uplands, and with his eyes bent upon the broad valley down below, he went on in simply aimless reverie. Thus he found himself within sight of Bygate before he was aware how far he had gone. He found it impossible to turn when once the old homestead was presented to his gaze, so with a stealthy and suspicious glance over all the sur-

rounding country, he advanced in a circuitous way, as though conducting a surprise assault against the rear of the house. He fancied that the place looked desolate, as if aware of the desertion of its ancient proprietors. The fresh north-west breeze breathed sighs through the fir trees, and the curlews and peewits uttered their plaints from the adjacent lands, all quiet in the high afternoon sun. The scene as at that moment presented was certainly calculated to impress a less sensitive spirit than that of young Crozier, and he drew near with ill-suppressed emotion. Amongst the fir trees he lingered. To a strange ear the place would have been silent at any time, but to Sibbald no silence like this had ever brooded over it. All the little sounds which betray the inner life even of a hill farm like this were absent. No fowls were scratching and chuckling by the byre door or in the stackyard ; no cock crew, although by Sibbald's watch it was three o'clock. No blatant geese, no ducks, no rustling of straw or hay being removed. No sigh from any cow, no horse pulling its chain in the manger ; no puffing or grunting from

the sty; no, not even the bleating of any lamb upon the hill behind. Even the curlews and the peewits had now ceased. The old man had done his work promptly and thoroughly.

A cuckoo called from somewhere afar, and then Sibbald advanced.

He tied the bridle of his horse to a gate by the hind's cottages, and went into the yard. As he entered, a cat fled into a loft, but there was no other sign of life. However, as he opened a door in the wall beneath a sycamore tree to pass round to the front of the house, he was startled by coming face to face with a human figure which he at once saw to be that of Jenniper. Each stared at the other in speechless astonishment.

"Then there are ghosts here," exclaimed the girl, she being the first to find her tongue.

"There are indeed," Sibbald assented grimly; "but I should have expected them to be dark and evil spirits instead of angels of light. But you are too late to bless the place. The curse has already fallen."

"You are no coming back to live here, then?"

said Jenniper, still trembling from the shock he had given her.

"It is farewell to Lochaber, my lass. The whole place is to be sold on Friday."

Sibbald tried to assume a jaunty air, which, however, sufficiently belied itself.

"Then it is true what we hae heard," was Jenniper's comment, made in a singularly subdued tone.

Now that his surprise was abated, Crozier could examine the apparition, and he found something in it to excite his attention. Brief though the time by the calendar, it certainly seemed ages to him since he had last seen Jenniper, but however long or short, he detected a change in her. Her whole appearance and behaviour was less aggressive than he had always thought it. That womanly tenderness, which he had never been able to associate with her, seemed to him at this moment exactly her most prominent characteristic. So much was he struck by it that he could not remove his eyes from her face. His stare disconcerted her, and she had to drop her glance. He even thought she blushed—Jenniper blushing!

"And what were you doing here?" he asked, after a few seconds' awkward silence.

"I just came out of curiosity, as the place was empty."

"To rejoice over the downfall of uncanny neighbours."

"Ay, if you like to think so."

"I dinna think so, Jenniper. I think what I said just now. If any good spirit could save us, yours just now would have done it. But nothing can save us. We are done. We are drifting into the foul stream of common life yonder, instead of holding to the clear ripple of our bonnie burns."

As Sibbald spoke, his eyes, glittering with excitement, were fixed upon the sunlit valley below, and Jenniper's turned to his.

"Can nothing stop it?" exclaimed she, in scarce disguised anxiety.

"Nothing, nothing. I have done all I can. I believe he is mad, utterly demented. Nothing else can explain his conduct."

"It would take a lot of money to buy it, nae doubt?"

"Two or three thousand pounds anyway. . . . No, I hae thought and thought, until my head is just fit to crack. Oh, I would do anything in the world to save it! It is like taking one's very life away. Ay, far worse than that. And it's a' my fault, ye ken."

As he turned to look at Jenniper, she thought tears were in his blue-grey eyes. She did not shrink from his glance this time.

"No, it isna your fault," she asserted forcibly.

"It is a' my fault, I tell you," was his angry rejoinder. "If I had no been a madman first, he would never have been one. It is I—I that have done it all. I have blasted my own life—killed him—and brought the old steading to the ground. That is just what I hae done."

Jenniper seemed about to speak, but the other's impetuosity prevented her.

"*You* expected it, my lass. I can see many things now that I couldna understand before. Why should you have been so much wiser than I? Why couldna you rescue me from what I was going to do?"

His eyes were now fixed upon her as if in angry accusation, and this emboldened her.

“Did I no do all that a modest woman could do?” said she, with a blush. “Ay, and I would hae done more, if more would hae been able to help you. But in affairs like yon a wilful man maun have his way. Ye ken nicely that naething that *I* could do would have opened your eyes for you. From *me* you would hae taken nothing. You would hae flung it a’ back in my face for the devilish spite and jealousy of a woman. What is a dour moth to a man when a braw butterfly comes along beside him?”

This unexpected vehemence somewhat sobered Crozier, and he looked at Jenniper silently, wondering at the flashing eyes and excited features. Then he offered his hand to her, but she did not take it. Not to be repelled, however, he laid his hand softly upon her shoulder.

“Jenniper, my dear lass,” he said in an altered voice, “I didn’t know what I said to you. You *did* do all you could for me. Now I can see it, and it ought to have been enough for me. Do not let us

quarrel about it. I shall not mend a broken life by offending the only friend that the world holds for me."

"You hae no right to say that," cried Jenniper harshly. "Do you mean to say that you hae parted wi' yon poor lass already?"

"Parted with her? No. I have only discovered that I was never joined."

"Then you ought to be joined," she replied in the same tone of agitation. "If you're stronger and wiser than she is, it's you ought to hae the patience wi' her. It's you ought to teach her how she may come up to you, and become the part o' your life she ought to be. Go back to her! Go back and tend her carefully, and she'll mend. She's no a bad lass, but she's ower flighty."

Sibbald trembled before this sudden and unexpected arraignment. It seemed to pierce to some sensitive depths of his, there to encounter similar emotions already half formed in him, but he braced himself up to resistance.

"You don't know what you ask. . . . I shall go

back to her, of course, but to do all that is impossible. She has not a single feeling in common with me. Her highest ambitions are detestable to me, and she—"

"I dinna want to hear this," interposed Jenniper. "In fact I dinna want to hear anything more at a'. I can do naething—"

He seized her imperiously as she turned to depart, and she at once stood still.

"Stay, Jenniper! You can do something. You can at least hear what I have to say, and what I can say to nobody else but you. Why shouldn't I say that? If I have wrecked my life haven't I all the more need of friends?"

"But I'll no talk about her. . . . What are you doing out yonder?"

"Do you mean what employment have I got? . . . None yet. I have tried to get some, and I swore I would never try again. But after this I shall try again. I will get some employment, and work, work, and never cease working until I get back all this."

He just flourished his hand around him to indicate the patrimonial estate. Jenniper quietly looked at him and nodded.

"That, at least, will be something to live for, and may make life tolerable even out yonder," continued he, seeming to regain vigour under the suggestion. "Lord Braiddale is sure to buy it, and under such circumstances he would resell it. Wouldn't he, Jenniper? Don't you think he would resell it to me, if I explained matters to him?"

"I hae nae doubt he would."

"Ay, ay, I'm sure he would. He is just the man to understand and sympathise with such a feeling. If I thought I should never have this place again I should go mad, or do something—"

"Dinna talk nonsense," interposed Jenniper. "Ye'll just gan back and get on wi' your work. That's all that concerns you now."

There was an authority in the girl's tone that seemed natural to the situation, and which even the proud and sensitive Crozier now took as a matter of course. He felt a dignified subjection to the lofty

qualities in her, such as he had felt before no human being before, and a chivalrous recognition of a high spirituality which poor, imperfect perceptions of his own knew to be their richer complement. Now and then a gush of feeling assailed him whereby he was urged to prostrate himself before this majesty, but the quickly following sense of chill, of everlasting banishment from such a radiance, checked and saved him.

“You are right, my lass. That is all that concerns me now, and I will gan and do it. Good-bye.”

This time she took his hand readily, felt her own pressed warmly, muttered a good-bye, and was gone. Sibbald returned through the doorway in the wall, and stepped hurriedly across the yard at the back.

But as he put one foot in the stirrup he found his resolution desert him. The blank prospect before him, now that her stimulating countenance was removed, daunted him. He dropped the bridle, and returned quickly to where he had left Jenniper. He saw her already some way off down the brae, took a step to follow, but stopped, and then went back and leapt into the saddle.

Firm and resolute though her step, and without so much as a thought of turning, none the less Jenniper advanced in a state of high agitation. She was constantly railing at herself for this disquieting emotion which she had let into her life, but it haunted her as constantly. No occupation or stubborn resolve would deliver her from it. The effect it had had upon her was noticed by others, but without any suspicion of the real source of it, if not without considerable mirth at the plight of the impregnable Jenniper. Her censorious friend, Maggie Laidler, alone knew the truth through her superior powers of divination, but she had not hitherto broached the subject; had, in fact, buried it, in view of the erratic, but, as she thought, opportune collapse of the Crozier family. But, as it chanced, she had to-day observed from her cottage door the converging figures on the Bygate ridge across the valley. The foot passenger she knew; but she had been unable to distinguish the horseman. Still she guessed and feared. If so, this was indeed worse than all, but Jenniper—impossible!

Before going home, Jenniper turned her steps towards Maggie's dwelling, and she walked in and sat down. Without greeting, the other looked at her with a harsh fixity of feature. Jenniper, too, said nothing.

"Well, ye're a bonnie traiveller," said the elder woman after some seconds of this mute examination. Then the visitor burst into tears; that is, the tears coursed down her cheeks without any movement of her features except the forehead, and without her making any attempt to hide them. This only made the woman's heart the harder, and loosened her tongue.

"And what are ye greeting at?" cried she. "Ye'll hae cause to greet sair enough afore ye've done, if that's the gate ye're gaun, hinny. What for should a lass like ye gan ower the moor meeting folks?"

"Dinna flite, Maggie," pleaded the girl submissively. "I canna stand it the day."

"Dinna flite, do you say? And do ye think I'll see ye gan to the varry deil without doing mair nor

fliting ye? I'll tell your father, lass. I wull. I winna be responsible for ye, sin' ye'll pay no heed to what I say."

There was rather vehement anxiety than downright anger observable in the woman's tones, which, no doubt, Jenniper did not fail to notice. She brushed her hand over her eyes, and stared at her antagonist.

"Maggie, ye'll no tell my father. Ye hae nothing to tell him o'. Listen, and I'll tell ye all about it."

"Whae did you meet out yonder?"

"Sibbald Crozier; but do ye think I'd hae gone had I kent that he was nearer than fifty miles away?" demanded the girl in a tone of angry dignity which the elder could not mistake. "I thought the place was empty, and I just went to hae a look round, for I hae never been by it in my lifetime for all I hae lived sae near. He maist scared me out o' my life when he came through yon doorway, for he made nae sound, and I didna ken that the door had opened—"

"And ye thought he was a ghaist, likely. Well, gan on; get to the meat o' the maitter."

"And I'll never speak to the lad again."

"Didna I tell ye that they were a' scoondrels in their hearts?" fired Maggie. "Ye'll aiblins tak' an aa'd woman's word now, hinny. To think o' him coming a' thir miles to guile a bonnie lass, and he but twa-three days wed—"

"Ye're a wicked woman!" retorted Jenniper with flashing eyes fixed upon her companion. "He guile a lass, do ye say! He'd no do sicna thing if a' the—"

"Then what for will ye no speak to him?" was the sarcastic rejoinder.

"Because *I* might guile him. I daurna say what I'd do. I whiles feel that the world's just wrong entirely a'together, and that I wouldna care what they said o' me."

"Whisht, lass!" said Maggie in a milder and kinder voice. "Ye maunna talk that gate. Sure enough ye'd find that the world was ower right, I can tell ye. Do ye ken—do ye ken, Jenniper—?"

Jenniper looked up and fixed her eyes on the harsh muscular woman.

"Did ye ever wonder why yon blackguard Jack

comes aboot me? . . . He's my bairn, lass; my only bairn. Though I got a husband and a good yane, God never gave me anither bairn after yon. And whae was his father, think ye? Just aa'd Maxwell Crozier. . . . Ay, ye may look. Do ye think I'll let a bonnie lass thole what I hae tholed, day and night now for nigh thirty years? The world's right, Jenniper, for it fand it out lang syne. And if ye'll no believe the world, believe me, ony way. If ye talk like yon ye'll just sneck your bonnie young life like a kale shank, and, Jenniper, I'd just thole a' my thirty year ower again, ay, and mair and mair, if I was to see ye in sicna plight."

The strange solemnity of Maggie's announcement, uttered so differently from the harsh, abrupt manner habitual with her, impressed Jenniper, and she viewed her friend with altogether new sympathy.

"Poor old Maggie!" she muttered.

"Dinna play with the fire, hinny," pursued the elder. "Ye'll hae a good husband and bonnie, bonnie bairns, that'll gie ye ither bonnie bairns at the hinder end. Ye'll no gan to the dark hoose all

alane, my lassie—nay, waur, far waur nor alane—” But the woman broke off abruptly, and turned to some employment in a corner of the room.

Sibbald meanwhile retraced his way over the hills at a slow pace. The interview he had had came as an aggravation of his disquiet rather than a healing of it. The work which Jenniper had imposed upon him, although stimulating for a moment, crushed him, now that he was again alone. A fury of self-vituperation possessed him. Now that it was too late, how easy was it to see where real salvation had been awaiting him. He could hardly misunderstand Jenniper’s frame of mind in spite of all her peremptory dismissal of him. What had he flung away from him in his blind eagerness to grasp—what?

All the Crozier soul in him burst into revolt against the bonds which held him. What were the bonds and by what authority were they riveted? Could they withstand the omnipotent claims of nature such as he felt to lie in this new revelation? The most desperate schemes flitted through his mind, sped onwards by the very crisis in his family affairs which

had but a few minutes ago braced him to the most heroic self-restraint. Instead of the hard firm track with the clear star at the head of it which he then had known, his soul was rent into the fiery chaos of self-indulgence with its *ignis fatuus* for his guide. Jenniper loved him, would he spurn the glory twice? To the devil go Bygate and all the world. He pulled the bridle with such violent abruptness that the horse reared and stumbled, and all but threw him. But he recovered himself, and turned his face once more to the Braid water.

He came to that brace by the roadside above Crawston where he had once before parted from Jenniper, when suddenly her figure in all the clearness of the flesh seemed to rise up before him. He reined in his horse and stared at the whin bushes, for to ordinary eyes there was nothing else to engage him. To Sibbald, however, Jenniper in all her transcendent restraining womanhood stood there. He stared into her beautiful eyes and trembled, quivered to the very hair tips. He saw no anger in her, only that placid gaze which he had so often

looked at in indifference. Now it burned into the inner soul of him. He was overwhelmed with speechless terror before it.

In her some bright and fleshless divinity arraigned him, throwing him into the blackest shades of sacrilege. Against her had he imagined this horrible and deadly thing, deeming that her starlike soul was on a level with his own grovelling one. How could he ever again face the sun? Her—he never again would face.

To the innkeeper's astonishment, the usually unsociable Scholar seemed intent upon emulating his father that night. Having despatched a brief note home, Sibbald sat in the bar and gave himself up to general hilarity with all who came. There was an air of abandonment about him which would have been obvious enough to anybody who had seen him of late days, but by his rural companions it was accepted as the normal development of his life in the town.

"If a lad hae ony spunk in him he'll find it out

yonder," said the innkeeper to a neighbour who remarked on the change; "and Sibbald's nae fool, ye ken."

He not only kept himself lavishly supplied with stimulants, but he had also an open hand for those about him, and in the terms of a licensed victualler a really good night was spent.

The consequence was that when Sibbald awoke in his strange bed the next morning at early dawn, he had but a vague recollection of the incidents that led to his being there. He felt singularly ill at ease, for, being young and healthy, whatever his spirits overnight he had hitherto invariably faced the morning with renewed pugnacity. To-day he felt extraordinarily dejected. Some jackdaws were chattering up the chimney, and as he lay listening to their colloquy he gradually recovered his thoughts.

When everything lay calmly before him, a wave of shame and self-condemnation swept over him. As he closed his eyes to meditate, the visage of Jenniper rose again clearly before him, and he felt that no veil were thick enough to hide him from those placid eyes. The intolerable indignity that he

had offered to that sacred image by his behaviour of the previous day stung him to madness. If he could he would have flung himself in the dust before her, and craved absolution from his crime, a crime, though, which in this morning sunlight he dared not so much as have hinted to her. Metaphorically he did so abuse himself, and a marvellous clearing of the vision resulted. Her attitude and all her words returned to him with audible distinctness, and he gathered strength from them. The road again lay clear. Even poor Adelina appeared transfigured before him, and invited him to a tender allegiance. She was a woman, and her sisterhood with that other visionary one became more apparent. If she were not all he had expected, no doubt the fault was his ; his, at any rate, the duty to raise her up to it as *she* had said.

Sibbald was again conscious of extraordinary vigour, and he leapt up, early as it was.

When he reached the town it was raining, and it was with disappointment that he heard his wife was

out. But he stood reading the paper he had brought, and when he at length heard the door, and the familiar step in the passage, he felt a tremulous sensation at the heart. Then the door opened.

END OF VOL. II.









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